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THE MASTER OF LIFE

F. WARBURTON LEWIS, B.A.

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Sermons

The Master of Life

BY

F. WARBURTON LEWIS

Κύριε, πρὸς τίνα ἀπελευσόμεθα; ῥήματα ζωῆς
αἰωνίου ἔχεις.—JOHN VI. 68

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS volume is offered, not only to the reader of sermons, but also to the student of the Life of Christ. My aim and my point of view will be manifest—Jesus *lived*; and His life, with its passion and its thought, its love and its daring, is the great reality, the centre of our world of life.

Sermon XII. was, after first being preached, written in its present form at the request of the Editor of *The Student Movement*, and is here included by his courteous assent. The others are printed, after slight correction, as they were preached without note or manuscript. My venture, then, is a daring one: it is a preacher's fragmentary offering, straight from the pulpit, to the study of the Life of Jesus, and it is made under the conviction, which I desire to express, that to preach Jesus, and not dogmas about Him or theories around Him, is the task most needing to be done in this world.

F. WARBURTON LEWIS.

ABERYSTWYTH, *December*, 1912.

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PART I

I

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto Him, If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But He answered and said, It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—MATT. iv. 1-4.

THE clue which we must not lose in all our searching for the meaning of Christ's life is that His life was, like ours, a life in which event came out of event—to-day being caused by yesterday and giving birth to to-morrow. And when we look at the narrative before us we have to ask in the first place, Whence came it? No one was there to record; and the only answer, and the answer which we need, is that the narrative came from the lips of Jesus Himself; and when we discern that, we learn this also—that in this narrative, Jesus tried to give His disciples some idea of the transcendent import of the spiritual contest through which He had gone. Behind the story there is Christ fighting out the fight of His own salvation. So what we have to do is not to

waste time asking curious questions as to whether the devil was there in visible form or not—it would not have been much of a temptation if he had been. If you could throw your inkpots at the devil, like Luther, things would go easily —inkpots are plentiful. It is because he is the all-pervading and all-inspiring presence of thought ; it is because he has us in the inmost and most sacred recesses ; it is because we find him where we are trying to find our true selves ; it is because he is there before we know : it is because of that that the temptation is so tragic.

Jesus spent these weeks in the wilderness, where there was little to eat but locusts and wild honey. He spent these days in deepest thought, with full purpose, and when He came out from them He was master of Himself. The reins of His life were in His own right hand. He knew Himself, His work, and the path He would travel in the days that lay before Him. To-day we must try to see how He became master of Himself, and how He became the Christ of Israel.

So for us the most important word of the text is the word we are most likely to overlook—the first word 'then.' 'Then was Jesus led up into the wilderness to be tempted.' When ? Straight from the baptism. At the Jordan it had been revealed to the Carpenter that He was the Son of God; it had been revealed to Him

that He was in supremest sense the Christ of Israel, the Messiah. It had been revealed to Him that He who had grown up from Mary's cradle had not simply come from Mary's cradle; at the baptism, when He offered His thirty years of life on the altar of consecration to the kingdom of God, there had come from on high the voice of the Eternal claiming and reclaiming Him, and there had come to Him the full overflooding consciousness of the Father's presence and the Father's love. He left the waters of the Jordan wrapped in prayer, as Luke tells us, knowing that the destinies of the ages had fallen upon His shoulders; that His duty was to be the Messiah of Israel—whatever that might prove to mean; that He had come to Himself; and that He was the Father's only begotten Son.

It was the hour of revelation; and when there has come to you an hour of revelation, the first desire, or rather the first impulse, of your heart has been to seek solitude, to be where you might be alone, that you might grasp the meaning of the new word of life that has come to you. Perhaps you have slipped away from the prayer-meeting, caring only to carry the word that has gone to the very heart of your life—caring only to be alone with it, that you might know its meaning; and afterwards, he who has come to

himself has had this tarrying in the wilderness, where he has faced the bare realities of himself and his God, of his relation to his God, and his relation to the world around him and before him.

The Carpenter does not return to the carpenter's shop. Forgetful of Nazareth, and all else that has closed behind Him, never again to be opened—forgetful of Nazareth—He goes into the solitudes of Judæa, and there, alone with the wild beasts, as Mark indicates, He wandered up and down in thought for forty days, being tempted of the devil. The temptation did not come at the end merely, but right through those forty days He wrestles with principalities and powers; He wrestles with Himself, His life, His higher self; He wrestles with His future; He wrestles with the revelation God had given Him, and the days passed into weeks, without notice, though not without effect. Flesh and blood cannot endure for forty days without the vigour being taken from the spirit; without the buoyancy of thought being lost; without languor stealing very near. He hungered—and there was more than hunger. See what He has to do—He has to grip this thought: 'I am the Son of God.'

You have looked upon Jesus as the Son of God from your cradle, until you have lost all sense of His marvel and His wonder. It came

to Him at the baptism as the revelation of the Eternal, crashing through all the habits, and all the thoughts, and all the moods of the days of Nazareth. And what is it to be the Son of God? He had known in the other life, before He escaped through the gates of birth. But the gates of birth were closed, and there was no vision through them; and even if He had known, it were of no use to Him now to have been the Son of God in heaven. That is one thing; but what is it to be Son of God in this flesh and blood? What is it to be Son of God on earth? What is it to be Son of God in a world of sin? What is it to be Son of God where daily duty calls with inexorable voice? What is it to be Son of God with the age making its claim upon Him? What is it to be Son of God in this life where no man knows what to-morrow shall bring forth? What is it to be Son of God where man has to work out his salvation step by step, and discover for himself in the light of the Spirit that comes to the opened heart from above—to discover the way of life, and to discover the will of God? What is it in the flesh and on earth, to be Son of God? And then (for it is contained therein), what is it to be the Messiah of Israel? That question we may postpone for the time being—but what is it to be the Son of the Highest, when living on earth?

Thus was He led up, right from the baptism

and the opened heavens. And you know, all you who have ever had hours of exaltation, what follows those hours of the unveiled heaven. You have gone home after some great revelation, or some hour of spiritual exhilaration, to awaken on the morrow, and lo, it is Monday, and the common round and trivial task await you ; and lo, there are all the sordid accompaniments of daily life, and the road of life is not one whit less muddy or less dusty, and the sun is hot, and the night is drear ; and you have met depression, have thought in your godlessness that yesterday was only a dream and a fancy, that the hour of exaltation was deception, that to-day in its drab common-place, and you, in the flatness of your spirits, are the only realities.

Yes, the heavens opened, and the voice of the Father claimed Him—but that was weeks ago. Since then, no word had come. The pitiless blue, like brass above ; the barren wilderness around Him, where roam the prowling beasts. Son of God ? Did He look like the Son of God, without accompaniment of angel or of glory ? Was it not a fancy and a dream ? Strong nerves overstrung, perhaps. It was the hour of consecration and song, of excitement and exaltation. Was it nothing but that ? And what follows ? Nerve, brain, power, spent—and lo ! Son of God, with the Messiah's work

to do. Without a follower! Without authority! Son of God? Go tell it in Nazareth—and He will meet with naught but scoffs, and sneers, and incredulity. That could not be faced. Son of God, and Heir to all the glories of Israel?—that seemed so incredible now. If the heavens would not relentlessly keep silence! If only the Father would answer! If only the Father would speak again! If only new assurance might come! If only the assurance had never been withdrawn! If only He had—what He might claim to have—the constant presence of the voice of God, and the constant treasure of the love of the Father. 'Then—well, I can prove whether I am the Son of God or no. Hungry? These stones I can make into bread, if I am the Son of God; and if I fail I shall know I am not. I may prove it.'

The tempter was in the innermost circle of His thought. The temptation was about His Sonship—to deny it in practice—to try to prove it, and to walk by sight. The angels which had bent to watch the drama of the fight, knowing the destinies that hung upon its issue, stopped their breathing in suspense. But the tempter was immediately foiled. As there is no doubt, neither is there wavering. There is knowledge at once of the duty which the word of God laid upon Him, 'Thou art My Son.' 'By that word, out of the mouth of God, I will live, and I will walk.

"Thou art the Son of God." Son of God I will be in the flesh, walking along the common paths of human life, within the limits of human liberty; never overstepping the life of manhood; never scorning in pride or presumption the common life God has given to man. My Father has bidden me be His Son—not there—but here. Not with display of miraculous power on my own behalf, but thus. The life of man is the life of obedience to God. He has bidden me be His Son here. The life of a son is the life of obedience, and He has bidden me prove that the life of sonship and the life of man are one, and that I must prove. My Sonship—not by claim from the heavens; not by being exalted with twelve legions of angels; not with flare of trumpet—I must prove my Sonship through obedience. I must prove my Sonship by working out the will and carrying out the word of my Father.

The devil was defeated, but he did not know it. The temptations that follow are an anti-climax.

The angels know that there is a long, long, fierce struggle before the man who says he will not live by bread alone. The angels know that before the end comes he shall again and again and again feel the power of the arms of the tempter; but they know that much has been gained, and they lean back with infinite relief. Man has said he

will not live by bread alone—Paradise is reclaimed! and yet, maybe, it shall be regained.

From this point you see stretching right before you the path Christ chose for Himself—the path of Sonship, of obedience, and of faith. Note, Jesus lived by choice, and by command of the Spirit of God to Him, the life of faith. Jesus of Himself never worked a miracle upon this earth. He tells us that He worked them by the Spirit of God—He was in touch with the Spirit of God. Jesus lived absolutely within the limits of humanity for four and thirty years. Jesus never lived by sight, but by faith. First of all men, He has to believe in Himself. You have been asked, and you will always be asked, to believe in Christ. But first of all Christ has to believe in Himself, and settle it then and there whether He is the Son of God or not. It was the beginning when He was told that—at the baptism. After that the struggle comes, and the darkness, and the loneliness, and the weakness. You know how weak you are after privation. In the weakness, the solitude, the friendlessness, the poverty, and the helplessness—bereft, not only of all the glories of earth, but of all splendour, and friendship, and love. There in the loneliness, in the cold world of solitude, He has to believe that He—He—He—Jesus of

the wilderness, within the reach of sin, the loathsome hand of the tempter upon Him—has to believe that He is the Son of God. I call that faith. No such faith has ever been exercised by any son of man before or since. From this hour He fights this fight of faith to the end.

From this point, too, we can see our own life as helpfully as from any other at which we shall ever stand. The writer to the Hebrews, who so understood the Master he had never seen, tells us that Jesus was 'tempted in all points like as we are.' In all points? Yes; because there is only one temptation. All temptations are merely the devil's ringing of the changes upon one lie. All temptations are comprehended in the temptation to doubt, to forget, to deny your sonship. The word of the Eternal is that you are the children of the Highest, and in a thousand ways man forgets, denies, gives God the lie. The prodigal in the far country has forgotten his sonship. He is denying it. When he comes to himself he will go to his father. That is the story of all the prodigals. But it is to you who dwell in the homeland that the helpfulness of Christ's victory comes. We will not speak of the days of battle, when the blood is stirred—victory is easy then; nor of the days of darkness, when sorrow strikes the heart—man becomes heroic

then. By the sick-bed the devil has no chance: the most heroic triumphs I have ever seen have been there. If ever a man knows he is the son of God, with the care of the Father around him, it is in the last weakness. But the days of danger are the dreary days, the days when monotony and common-place stretch from dawn to dark, from month to month: the days in which there is no fatted calf, no music, and no dance, but only the grey fields from sunrise to sundown. This long, flat, dusty road—can this lead me nearer God? This cold, limited, unheroic life—is this the life of a child of the Highest? Am I—I, here and now—a son of God? Temptation comes; the days are all alike, and there is no heroism in the years; inspiration goes from us, and we surrender either to the beast within us, and take to the swine-troughs, or to the slave, and work for hire. It is then that the evangel of the life of Jesus comes to us—by the carpenter's bench, in the solitude and loneliness of the wilderness, through the grim, grey days, when the heavens make no sign. What is true in your highest moments is always true, and true now, amid the trivial round and the common task. I am what my Father has said me to be. It matters not what others think of me. It matters not what I think of myself—only what God thinks of me is the real and the true. It does not matter how you *feel*. The

religion based on feeling is as unstable as the shifting tides and the sinking sands. The tide is full one hour, brimming over in its glorious strength. The ebb comes, and there are naught but the black, grim rocks of darkness, and dread, and danger. The religion based on feeling is of no value for the fight of life. It does not matter how you feel. Jesus did not feel like the Son of God. It matters what you are in God's sight and by God's word, and here, now, amid the darkened light, the duty and the common-place, in the carpenter's shop, and all the work and wear and all the glory of life's day—now—we are the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be.

How easily He turns the tides!
The fullness of my yesterday
Has vanished like a rapid dream,
And pitiless and far away
The cool, refreshing waters gleam;
Grim rocks of dread and doubt and pain
Rear their dark fronts where once was sea;
But I can smile and wait for Him
Who turns the tides so easily,
Fills the spent rock-pool to its brim,
And up from the horizon dim
Leads the bright morning wave again.

II

THE POWER OF FAITH

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.
LUKE iv. 14.

MY desire is to spell out the little that I understand concerning the relation of Jesus while in the flesh to the Holy Spirit, hoping that it will give us a better knowledge of Jesus Himself, and that it will throw light upon our relation to the Holy Spirit. For years it has been said that the next great book which will be written will be a book on the Holy Spirit. One thing only I know—that that book can only be rightly written by the man who starts his study with the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit entered upon His reign of sovereignty in this world when Jesus passed through the veil. His coming, whatever it was, in His full power—a power transcending altogether the power He had possessed in the world before—His coming was caused by and was altogether dependent upon the victory of Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh. And it is of no use praying, and of no use getting excited concerning the Holy Spirit, until we know

something about Him whose Spirit He was, and through whose death and ascension He came.

We look at the narrative, and we find that Jesus—to use the language of the Acts of the Apostles—was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. We read that He was then led by the Spirit into the wilderness of temptation. (We may remark in passing that when people pray for a baptism of the Holy Spirit, anything like that is far from their thoughts, and if they found themselves suddenly in the dread wilderness of temptation they would think their prayers had not been heard, which shows that they are not instructed in the Scriptures.) Then we find that through the fight of temptation His possession of that Spirit was so enlarged and deepened that, full of it, He went forth into Galilee to commence His ministry. Let us then record this much as known —that while the Spirit of God had been moving through the ages of man—that while the Spirit of God had moved within the life of the Boy of Nazareth as within the lives of all other men, a new era began when at the Baptism the Son of Mary found that the veils had all grown to gossamer, and that He was in touch with the powers of the Highest as no man hitherto had ever been ; He went forth endowed with power, of which we must try to spell out the meaning as we study His life.

Let us write it down as understood that that hold of God, that touch with God, that nearness to God, was only made His own surely and lastingly by the dread grapple with the devil who tried to tear it from His heart—and then let us ask if we can tell what it was to Jesus thus to be anointed with the Holy Ghost. What did it mean to Him? The Acts of the Apostles (x. 38) has this account of His life: 'Jesus of Nazareth—God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power, who '——What followed, do you think?—'went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him.' Is that all? Whether it be all or not, Peter mentioned that as the first outstanding result—'He went about doing good.'

The miracles of Christ were the work of the Holy Spirit. They were not the work of Jesus. To make that quite clear, we are told in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and in verse 22, by Peter also: 'Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you.' And Jesus Himself tells us in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, and at verse 28: 'If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you,' or, as it is phrased by Luke in a word that brings the very touch of God to be felt in Christ's life, 'I cast out

demons by the finger of God.' It was because He was in touch with the power of the Supreme that He was able to dispense those works of mercy and healing which formed so large a part of His daily work.

We find as we follow Him in this work of healing that there was the habit of prayer. He prayed in agony at the grave of Lazarus. Once and again it is recorded that before the work was done He prayed, and then the work was done. That does not mean, I think, that Jesus had to beseech His Father. Prayer with Jesus was not making request—it was getting into closest touch with the Spirit of the Father. 'By Myself,' He said, 'I can do nothing.' And prayer for Him was the leaning back upon the supreme power of His Father, and in union with Him all things were possible. 'This kind,' He said, 'can come out by nothing, save by prayer.' You see Him when He said that, standing amid a troublous multitude and distracted disciples, after He came from the presence of God upon the mount of Transfiguration. You find Him for the moment disturbed on the surface of His life—'How long shall I be with you?' Then He leans back and enters into the peace of the Eternal, and as He sees the multitude rushing forward in curiosity, the work is done, and He sends them away.

This work of healing was a primary part of Christ's gospel, part of the good tidings which He brought to man. The powers of the Highest are on man's side—' if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come among you.' He meant : ' I am the kingdom of God ; I am the link between you and the eternal wealth and the eternal splendour of God ; and if the demons which distract the body and the mind of man are being cast out, then rejoice, for the sovereignty of God is come among you, and God through me is beginning to rule things according to His will, to put things straight, to banish evil, to enthrone health and peace.'

Before we go further, then, we go back to Christ's narrative of the Baptism, for there we find unveiled in a symbol the innermost meaning of what it was to Christ to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. He has put the meaning that there was for Him in that experience into the symbol of the dove. It does not matter anything at all whether there was the visible form of a dove descending upon Him. Those who are most conscious of the exact meaning of the Greek expression tell us that even Luke's language does not necessarily imply that. It matters not. Jesus is putting the deepest experience of His life hitherto into a form that may have some meaning

to His disciples, and He speaks of the anointing of the Holy Spirit as if it were a descent upon Him of the dove. Why does He speak of the dove? I think there was in His mind a passage in the scriptures of His people, which were ever haunting His thought, and this had for Him on that occasion a meaning that illuminated His whole life and gave Him His mission. It was the dove that brought back to Noah the tidings that there was a world at last, the dove of good tidings. We read in Luke's narrative that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and that forthwith after the struggle in the wilderness He went forth on His ministry, and a fame went out concerning Him through all the region round about as He was teaching in their synagogues. Teaching what? The gospel of good tidings. He came to Nazareth and said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor.' For Christ the anointing at the Jordan was this, that He had come in closest touch with the will of God, and that all the thoughts of His heart in the years past—all His longings—all His ideas as to what the people needed—all His thoughts of God's relation to mankind were taken up, and God said to Him, 'Go and preach what Thou hast thought. Go—Thou art My Christ, Thou art My Messiah, Thou art My Messenger—Go and preach.' And it was

with a heart of illimitable joy that Christ left the company of John, for all the good tidings of the gospel lay warm and clear within His consciousness, and when He had emerged from the testing-ground of the temptation He went, and is it any wonder that a fame flashed through all the neighbourhood ?—He went full of the joy of the Holy Ghost, full of the knowledge of God's good-will towards man, full of all that has made preachers to rejoice through all the ages of the Church, full of the joy of preaching glad good tidings, by deed and by word, to all the people of His nation and His day. That is it—He had come into touch with God. God's will and grace were made known to Him, and the Father laid in His charge the work of making it known ; and when you read that He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, you go on to read that He went preaching and teaching through the towns and the villages expounding that gospel which is now blessing the nations with light and peace and joy, and that wherever He went the deaf heard, the blind saw, men came in touch with the living power of God, their bondage was snapped, their prison-houses opened, and health and life brought back to them.

He said to Nathanael, ' Are you surprised at what I have told you ? Henceforth ye shall see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Know, O Nathanael, that God

and man are linked together; at last there is union, and all the messengers of health and peace and grace and life shall have free course now. The veils have gone. The distances have gone, and man and God have been brought together in unity.'

It would make all the difference to our life if in our heart of hearts we understood this. It would make all the difference in our lives if we believed that what was possible for Christ is possible for us. Christ must lead us here along the paths of His own experience and the ways of His own life, and we must live where He lived, and in a measure—a measure that can only be limited by sin which should have no place in us—in our own measure we too must be filled with the Holy Spirit. 'By Myself I can do nothing,' said Jesus. If that is true of Him, is it not true of us? Why then are we trying to live, to weave out painfully and tortuously our own feeble lives? Why are we trying to live out of touch with the Eternal?

When Jesus came into close contact with evil, all electric (if I may say so) with the power of the living God, I am not surprised that the realms of evil were greatly moved, and that things happened then that have never happened since. I know this, that in those three mortal years the powers of the demon-world were dethroned, and

that they have never since had the power in human life that they had then. No wonder there were eruptions when the power of the Truth was incarnate in flesh and blood—your flesh and blood, and mine. No wonder there was dethronement, no wonder there was disturbance. But we do not place the emphasis there.

The leading scientists of to-day are studying the occult phenomena known as psychics, and they are trying to read the meanings of the strange happenings called spiritualistic phenomena. We no longer smile at them, or shrug our shoulders. Emmanuel Kant, the coolest man that ever lived, who had no more than one meal a day, and who wrote the coolest philosophy of Germany, said, ' Knowing nothing as I do of the way in which the spirit enters this life, and knowing nothing of the way in which it leaves it, I dare not say that such things cannot happen.' But we do not lay the emphasis there. To lay the emphasis there would only be to stray from the centre to the circumference.

The leading psychologists of to-day in their study of the mind of man tell you that half of your mind is unconscious, and concerning it you know nothing at all. Strange eruptions, volcanic almost in their intensity, disturb the life of this mind or of that. And they tell us there is a great sub-conscious world with which we are

connected. They mean, though they do not say so, that beneath us is the mighty ocean of which our consciousness is but the wavelet on the surface, that beneath us there is—God. We do not lay the emphasis there, though it will help you to remember that, according to the clearest and newest thought of to-day, it is wisdom to get away from the distraction of the moment and the surface appearances of things, and to come consciously into union with the Eternal and the Infinite which is around and above you, and from which there is no escape.

We lay the emphasis here—that in nothing occult, mysterious, but in something very common and common-place, Jesus found God. He came to the Jordan after thirty years of simple and sheer obedience ; and God said, ' Thou hast arrived—Thou art My Son—Go, preach the life Thou hast lived.' The common way of life He lived, and travelling along that road He came right up to the Eternal presence, and when man had made that offering, God's response was absolute and it was immediate ; Jesus went forth, and all His life thereafter was a life of conscious dependence, moment by moment, day by day, upon His Father and His Father's Spirit.

For us, too, that is possible. For us that is the only life worth living. There will be temptation ; the devil will try to drag us from our endeavour,

as he tried to drag Jesus. If only he can get that man's flesh and blood—if only he can get that lone and trembling heart of Jesus to let go—then God has no chance and the world belongs to the devil. The whole fate of God's destiny is involved in the bloody sweat of that terrific contest in the wilderness. If only he can get Him to deny, to forget, to disbelieve God's word to Him, it is all over. And only less tragic is the fight within our lives. The devil uses the colour, the dullness, the mood, the temper of each day, the selfishness of the flesh, and the unbelief of our thought—he uses all these to seduce us from the Father, and he uses many things that otherwise would be lawful and healthful to draw us away from the Eternal, and so our lives become barren, poor, and pitiful. Whereas if we fight a good fight, and if we simply live in the presence of the Father, working in union with Him the works that are works of love, with the Father, who is not far from any one of us, who is nearer than breathing and closer than hands and feet, then we shall find, as Jesus found, that God is here or He is nowhere, that God is my God or there is no God, and that he who lives there is full of the Holy Spirit and he is the son of the Father.

Lastly, the dread of it all is in one sentence in the letter to the Hebrews. The writer of that

letter, who knew so much of Christ, though he had never seen Him, puts all Christ's life in this one word: 'Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God.' The life of sacrifice, of loss, of death—that is the life of the Spirit—growing unto Resurrection and Ascension glory.

PART II

III

CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM (1)

And seeing the multitude, He went up into a mountain ; and when He had sat down, His disciples came unto Him ; and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—MATT. v. 1-3.

THE Sermon on the Mount, as we call it, has of course always been recognized as Christ's supreme effort in teaching ; but to understand its full place and significance in His work and in our lives we must take all the care we can to set it in its right place in His ministry. Unfortunately we gain the impression from Matthew's Gospel that this sermon stood at the very beginning of His work. We know, however, that Matthew's Gospel is not arranged in any order of time, and when we compare the other Gospels with it we find that this great address was given, not at the beginning of His ministry, nor near it, but about half-way between the opening of His work and His death. He had so far done work in several directions. He had preached, until forbidden, in the churches of the land. He had made Himself known to those who were outside

the realm of Church and of Society. He had made Himself known throughout all the land, both in Galilee and in Judæa, and even in Samaria. All that ministry of over a year is summed up by Matthew in the great paragraph which closes the fourth chapter of his Gospel ; there you are told, after Matthew's manner, that He had done work in the way of teaching, work in the way of preaching, work of healing, and you are told, again in Matthew's manner, that He was known throughout all Syria, and that there followed Him as He returned from Judæa great multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, from Judæa and from beyond Jordan.

The first part of His ministry had ended in that seemingly great and glorious success. He had gained this—He was known ; in spite of the opposition of the leaders the people were flocking in their multitudes to hear.

Now He enters upon new lines, and very deliberately begins to work upon that great multitude gathered under the fascination of His name and of His power. He begins deliberately to sow the seed—the seed of His Father's mind, the thought which is the very blood of His own life. He begins to sow that seed in the minds of the people who hear Him. It is remarkable that from the first twelve or fifteen months of His ministry we have some records, we can trace the kind of work

He did, but we have practically no teaching handed down to us. He taught in synagogue and open air, but it was not until He began this more deliberate and consecutive train of teaching that His words began, probably by Matthew himself, to be noted down. And so it is not a mistake in itself, it is only a chronological error, that Matthew has placed this great body of teaching near the forefront of his Gospel; for his Gospel is particularly the Gospel of the teaching of Christ.

As these great crowds then began to flock towards Him, He deliberately withdrew from the crowded city streets—for crowded they were; Galilee was packed with people, and those towns, which are desolate now, were thronging almost as the towns of our own Lancashire—He withdrew from the busy towns on to the upland plain which they called 'the mountain.' There the people followed Him, and you are to see Him sitting down in the attitude of a teacher. There is an inner and an outer circle of hearers—the inner circle is composed of those who are called His disciples; their numbers are unknown to us, but they are those who had more or less formally attached themselves to Him—taken Him to be their Rabbi; and the outer circle was composed of the great crowds that had gathered.[1] He was speaking to His disciples in the inner circle, that

[1] See Note A, p. 208.

His words might pass through them to the circle beyond. He was, of set purpose, drawing to Himself those who would respond to His teaching, accept His spirit, and then, saved by that spirit, go forth to save those that were beyond. So now for the first time, formally and fully, He unfolds His thought, and definitely sets Himself in opposition to the teaching and thought of His nation and of the day. His task is to establish on earth the kingdom of God, God's sovereignty in human life. So He now describes that kingdom and the citizens thereof.

We are so used to it that we have ceased to be astonished, but in this place Jesus of Nazareth not only puts aside, with a little scorn, the teaching of the leaders of the day, but calmly and with authority tells His disciples that even what had been revealed through men of old time and recorded in the scriptures of His people, even that is not enough. He calls them to a higher plane of thought and of life.

You are struck at the very outset with the contrast between the thunders of Sinai and the opening word that falls from His lips—' Blessed.' No command here, but a benediction. No denunciation here of the hearts and lives, of the thoughts and motives before Him. Among those standing around Him were men and women

who were blessed with the last blessedness—that which God counts blessedness. Then He lets fall the word, which seems to us so quiet, but which fell as a thunderbolt, telling them that the kingdom of heaven, the inheritance of God's people, belonged not to those who claimed it, not to those who in His own day and the days gone by had loudly proclaimed their right to it and their possession of it, but to those whom He calls ' poor in spirit.'

Now when Jesus uttered that word ' poor,' He was thinking first of all of a set of people who had dwelt in Israel since the Exile. There were parties in Israel official and orthodox and rigid, other parties strong and wealthy and brazen, each of whom claimed by right of birth and blood and knowledge God's kingdom for their own possession. Jesus ignores their claims, and refers incidentally to those quiet folk who were called ' poor,' not because they lived in material poverty, but because they had been the quiet and often oppressed and afflicted people who kept God's promise and God's word in simple hearts, of whom Jesus Himself came, to whom His mother and His friends of boyhood belonged. His first reference is historic, and He is referring to these ; only He lifts the historic reference, giving it an eternal meaning ; and, rising above all that petty distinctions, declares that all that God has to give—the

realm of His own full and wondrous life, the kingdom of God's love itself—is the right and possession of the poor in spirit. 'Blessed *are* they . . . ,' not 'Blessed shall they be'; now and here the blessedness is theirs; now and here heaven is theirs.

This first Beatitude is not merely the first of the seven, it is more than one of the seven, it includes the other six. The poor in spirit are the people whose graces and characteristics come out, some of them, in the Beatitudes that follow—the mourners, the meek, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, are all of them members of that goodly company whom He calls poor in spirit. And, on the other hand, the blessings which He promises and which He says are theirs—comfort, inheritance of the earth, righteousness, mercy, the vision of God, the sonship of God—these are all part of the kingdom of heaven, which is the possession of the poor in spirit.

Then notice how Christ not only sets His thought and judgement against the teachers of His own church, but He sets it once and for ever against the judgement of this world. 'Blessed are the strong, blessed are the mighty, blessed are the rich, blessed are the royal, blessed are the

high-born, blessed are the successful, blessed are the happy,' the world has said and will say to the end of time. ' Blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that hunger after the righteousness which they do not possess, the pangs of whose hunger are as the fire of agony within them, blessed are they that make peace and not destruction.' So speaks this Galilean prophet, sitting on the upland hillside with no outward authority and without any possible chance of sending His word down the long cruel ages that are to follow. He sets His thought and His spirit against the tone and temper of the world, and that spirit through the hard centuries has slowly won its way, until men know, whether or not they have submitted their lives to the governance of His word, that beyond controversy the deepest blessedness is this blessedness of which the Nazarene spoke.

The ' poor in spirit ' are they who are conscious of need before God. Let us grasp with both hands the glorious fact that Jesus did not condemn the human heart, but that He found the human heart sometimes to be blessed, and could let His benediction fall upon it. From many hearts He turned away with deep and bitter sadness—' Oh, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin ' — He could not do for them what

He would; and He turned in hopelessness from the churchmen of the day—for them He could do nothing. Why? Because they wanted nothing. They were content; they were satisfied. All they would ask of any one was the removal of the Roman fetter. 'I thank Thee, O God, that I am not like other men. I have brought Thee what Thou askedst, I ask nothing from Thee.' It is the spirit which is the deepest misery, the deepest curse of the religious life. Wherever that spirit wins its way the gates of God's heaven are shut and the windows thereof are closed. You can do nothing for the man who does not want to be blessed, who does not know his need. Follow it out along this one line: Jesus is setting Himself to teach. 'Blessed are the children,' said Christ. Children are always wanting to know. They are conscious, unconsciously conscious, that there are many things they do not know. You can tell and tell and tell a boy endlessly, and he will drink it in. But there are multitudes of religious people who never learn. Their hearts are hermetically sealed. They say their creed is built. If a teacher comes who speaks, after the manner of the Christ, that which is new, they are bitterly resentful, and, except in outward fact, they relight the fires of Smithfield. This world is all of one piece, and what happened in one century repeats itself in another.

So long as the spirit of pride—not the spirit of vanity, which is a man's bearing towards his fellow men—but the spirit of pride which stands before God in self-satisfaction—so long as that spirit prevails, the power to learn, to be blessed, to receive the word that maketh to live, is dead.

Those who are conscious of their need are blessed because they stand in the only attitude towards God which is fitting, and it is the attitude which Christ Himself says is supremely blessed. We stand beneath the goodness of our God, aware of all our need, aware that He alone can satisfy that need, aware, when Christ has once spoken, that God is waiting to fill our heart and life. ' Fear not, little flock ; it is the pleasure of your Father's life to give you the kingdom.' The man who said he would not take God's harvest would be counted a fool. The harvest is the everlasting remembrance to us that, beyond any work of our own hand or brain, God gives, and all we can do is to receive. Only the poor in spirit can say, ' Give us this day our daily bread ' ; and Christ gathers His disciples around Him and says that that is the everlasting attitude of the right-minded man. He calls us to live beneath the open sky of God's ever present grace. This is the Master's supreme statement of the doctrines of Grace and Faith. The primal and final relation of man to God is this : God gives,

man receives. We have simply to believe that the kingdom of God is here and now. There is no need to wait. All the kingdom of His life, with all its grace and glory, is ours. 'Believe the gospel'—the good news. Only the poor in spirit can so believe. 'Nothing in my hand I bring' is too hard a word for pride. Blessed are they who know that they need, and that it is only heaven that is given away, only God that is had for the asking. To such men all things are possible: to them it shall even be granted to become perfect as their Heavenly Father is perfect. When men have become willing to receive, they shall attain the higher blessedness of giving, and shall make the rain descend upon the just and the unjust. The kingdom—the sovereignty—of God shall be theirs.

IV

CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM (2)

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.—MATT. v. 4—6.

JESUS is describing those who shall be citizens of His kingdom. In these seven Beatitudes He unfolds their character. He calls them poor in spirit, their fundamental characteristic being that they are conscious of their poverty, conscious of their need, and willing to receive. Theirs —simply because they are willing to receive— theirs is the kingdom of God's own life. And then in these three and the three following Beatitudes He describes these men whom He has called 'poor in spirit' in the varied traits of their character. He holds up the gem, that you may see the differing colours of the different facets, and He portrays for you a character which is the strongest, the most vivid, the most manly character that you have ever been asked to look upon. Think not there is any touch of weakness in these words. He tells you at the end that this

is the only foundation which can stand the storm of life. And history through nineteen centuries has been verifying the word of the Master-Builder.

It needs not to be said again that His words contradict all ideals of our own. The question for us is whether we are poor in spirit, that is, whether we are now willing to learn, whether we are willing to unlearn what has been wrongly taught, and willing to learn what He has to tell. If not, we are outside His hands ; for us He can do nothing. But for those who are His disciples in spirit He will work out the wonder of His full redemption.

'Blessed are they that mourn.' We had thought that they who escape pain are blessed. We had thought that it is part of life's wisdom to shield oneself from all that hurts, and we know how possible it is for those who choose to guard themselves against much of life's sorrow. But here He places the word 'blessed' upon those who really mourn. At first sight the words seem to be merely a contradiction in terms, but immediately you look into the matter you see how right the Master is. Here is one upon whom some sorrow falls. What effect will that sorrow have upon that heart? The heart may turn sullen, resentful, crying out against the gods, and

from sullenness go on to sourness. Cursed are they that cannot mourn. The heart that cannot mourn is blasted, blighted, or withered. But let the sorrow pierce to the depths of the heart and be taken right home, and that heart will come from under God's hand chastened, made wise, made strong, made new.

But there is here the need of mourning for something which lies in every heart. One of the fundamental necessities of human character, if human character is to grow into beauty, is that the heart should mourn over its sin. Hidden in the heart of us all there was, and there is, sin. The man who has not mourned over it is its victim. The man to whom the touch of sin upon his thought does not bring tears of agony is cursed. The man to whom that indwelling sin is pain is on the way to redemption and a perfect deliverance. Blessed are they that mourn, for then God can do His will, which is their sanctification, their absolute cleansing and deliverance from the hateful disease that lurks in the blood of man.

But there is a wider mourning which must be ours. Christ is describing, I said, the character of the citizen of His kingdom. Citizenship is not a narrow thing. Citizenship is a man's bearing towards the city of His people; and cursed are they who do not mourn over the sin that blights

the fair life of earth, and cursed are they who do not mourn always, within the very heart of all their gladness, over the sorrow, the pain, und the misery in which so many lives are crushed. If we have no thought for the humanity of which we form a part ; if we have no thought for all the hindrances to God's upward purpose ; if we have no sympathy—then in God's sight we are cursed, and how God tolerates us I do not know. And if we have no sympathy with the eternal passion, the eternal sorrow, the eternal suffering of the Father and Saviour of this world, then have we failed to reach the blessedness of His children.

Blessed—not with any blessedness which has come from men, but with the blessedness of the divine likeness, and of the divine fellowship—blessed are they that mourn over all that is sad, over all that is wrong, over all that is hateful in earth's fair life. Blessed are they who are of the fellowship of the Christ, who wept over Jerusalem because the fair prospects of His home had fallen into dust in her streets, and her house, dear to His name, was left unto her desolate.

' Blessed are the meek,' the lowly, the gentle, those who have no self-assumption, those who will put up with a great deal, those of whom He was one when He said, ' I am meek and lowly in spirit,' and of whom Peter wrote, ' When He was reviled

He reviled not again. When He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously.' Blessed are the sufferers. How cursed are they who are ever striving to assert themselves, to push themselves forward! How cursed are they who are ever standing upon their dignity! The deepest and vilest misery of life is their portion. Cursed are they who strain to make the world their tool, their game, their sport, the creature of their passion and their pleasure. Cursed is the Napoleon who makes the nations but pawns on the chessboard of his plans and success, and blessed is the Nelson whose fundamental characteristics were gentleness, the absence of that pride and ambition, and the presence of that devotion which led him to his death praying that his death might be a great victory not only for his nation, but for the whole of Europe.

There are those who try to make use of everything for their own end. You may watch their fate on the scenes of history. ' They who do not build on My word,' said Christ, ' are like the man who builds on the sand, without foundation,' and history is one continuous record of such buildings and such overthrows. There are those, on the other hand, who are willing to sink themselves into the universal plan of God, or for the matter of that, into the plans of God and of human

progress which come nearest to them—who are willing to sink themselves and all their strength and talent and fortune ; and you hear not their name, you tell not their tribute, but it is they who inherit the earth.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit—heaven, we thought He was going to say ; but Christ's religion is founded four-square upon this present earth, and He tells us that it is the meek, the lowly, and the gentle who inherit even this earth. Has He not inherited it ? Did they not bring Him to the cross, and did He not turn the other cheek? And has not the empire of the earth been passing away, slowly, but with inexorable sureness, from the hands of the violent, the self-assertive, and the strong, and is it not coming into the hands of the Christ ? The apostles were peasants of Galilee, and they asserted not themselves in this world, but flung themselves into the devotion of Christ's cause ; and it is their words and their thoughts that are governing the finest part of earth to-day, and shall govern. What chance was there that anything those twelve men cared to say—Jesus and His faithful eleven—would survive, or ever more be heard of ? What chance was there that anything they, with their feeble hands, might choose to build, would ever escape the conflagration of the ages ? Think of the empires of man's might, of the efforts of

human power which have failed because built on wrong foundations ; and then think that those peasants, fishermen, and tax collectors of Galilee are inheriting the earth.

But I want you to notice another illustration of Christ's thought. A hundred years ago yesterday[1] Nelson did, I suppose, the one thing that required to be done for England's peace, when he lifted from the mind of Britain the nightmare of a French invasion, and completely broke a great despot's plans. But greater are the triumphs of peace than the triumphs of war. We lost much at Trafalgar. We lost the French nation for many a long year. Yesterday we bade our friends farewell, and the triumph of the Admirals of France as they saluted the Nelson statue was as great, and in its kind far greater, than the victory of our great hero at Trafalgar ; and we have gained France ; our empire is extending. You may travel in France, you may go and gain from her knowledge of life's wealth which you did not possess, and she shall gain from us. But this is done, not by the methods which made the name of a Frenchman the most hateful of all names a short century ago, but it is done by the methods of gentleness, by our king's refusal to allow self-assumption to be the mark of our

[1] The illustration is accounted for by the fact that the sermon happened to be preached on the day after the Nelson Centenary.

bearing in Europe, and so banish the spirit which has lately drawn together the neighbouring nations of Europe. The meek are inheriting the earth.

Notice 'inherit.' He does not say 'possess.' He says more than that, 'inherit.' A man who merely possesses, a man who holds, may be a proud, selfish man; he may be a man who rides in constant fear, for a stronger man than he may pluck his possession from him; but he who inherits may live in retirement, in obscurity, and unknown, because he knows that at the last things are his. He walks through life, not presumptuously, not lording it over men; and we are to move through life, if we have gained the Spirit of Christ, knowing that God has so made His universe, that whoever may possess, or seem to possess, to-day or to-morrow, nevertheless, the earth that is to be, the earth that shall be at the last, is the inheritance of the meek. Even to-day you may walk through some ducal estate which is possessed by a nobleman who scarcely ever sees it and never enjoys it, and you may have a truer possession of it, though you possess not one foot of land by English law. It is they whose hearts are open to all the simple joys of life, who 'look on the earth not as man has parcelled it out, but as God has fashioned it, whole and beautiful, who feel at home beneath the Father's sky,'[1] it is

[1] Ainsworth, *The Blessed Life*, p. 20.

they who enter in now to the possession of earth, and, far beyond that, the earth that is to be when God's developments are complete, shall be theirs.

Why? For this reason. 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.' It is only the meek, the gentle, the long-suffering, who will open their hearts to the suffering and the sin of this world. It is only they who think more of others and of God than they think of themselves, who will allow the burdens of this earth to weigh upon them; and it is only they who have that passion of righteousness in their heart which means, not only a hunger and a thirst for the righteousness of perfect character which they do not yet possess, but a hunger deeper still for the righteousness which shall one day cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Oh, there are those who in all sincerity are willing to say with Paul, 'I reck not of my own salvation if only I could see this earth brought to righteousness.' There are those whose eyes are ever hungry in their look, and whose hearts are restlessly drawn to the great future; and it is the passion of their hearts, the undying desire of their prayers, that constrain the stars in their courses. It is these desires that are the strongest forces in human history; and whatever else fails, whatever else goes astray, this

shall verily come to pass, that he who desires to be righteous according to the thought of God shall be righteous, and he who believes and works that this earth may be clothed in purity shall surely be satisfied, for God Himself has laid down His life for this. And remember—the righteousness for which you are to hunger is not the righteousness of to-day, but God's own thought concerning you, the perfect character of the Christ; and that shall be yours, not because you can win it, but because it is God's own will and gift.

V

CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM (3)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
MATT. v. 7-9.

JESUS is building the fair temple of the Christian character. He first of all dug out the foundations, digging through and removing many things upon which men are wont to build, until He had got down to the bedrock which He calls 'poverty of spirit'—that consciousness of need upon which the kingdom of heaven itself may be built. Then He laid His foundations threefold, and no character can fairly be built except upon this threefold foundation. (i.) The consciousness of sin in one's own heart and in the world, and of the world's sorrow, or your relation to that which is beneath in the darkness and in the pain. (ii.) Then your bearing to the earth around you, on which verily this kingdom is to be upbuilt, that meekness, the absence of self-assumption, the spirit to which alone shall the possession of earth come at last according to the law of God.

(iii.) This, lastly, without which He Himself, the great builder, can do nothing—that hunger and thirst after righteousness to which all is possible and all is promised. The relation of our heart and thought to that which is beneath us, to the earth around us, and to the righteousness above us,—until our life is so laid out in foundations, the fair edifice cannot be built.

And now He uprears upon this the fair temple of His Righteousness ; Righteousness as it is in His own thought and in His own character, and as it is to be in us. You must not regard these blessed as men of different classes. These beatitudes are only the sevenfold blessings which make up the one and only character of the disciple of Christ and of the children of God. ' Ye shall be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect,' and in this threefold text of mine you get the glory, the blended glory of Christ's great thought.

You see at once the contrast between His conception of righteousness and the conception held by other men, when you touch the word ' merciful.' Paul said a very deep thing when he wrote these words : ' Scarcely for a righteous man will one die.' A righteous man, if he is of earth's pattern, is not loved with that abandon that would lead one to sacrifice oneself for him. There have been, and there remain, about the portraits

of righteousness sketched by earth's artists, lineaments that are hard, cold, if not harsh ; and except your righteousness exceed the strictest righteousness of the Pharisee you have not entered, and you cannot enter, into the kingdom of Christ's thought and life. There is about this righteousness of Christ a colour missing from the others, and a warmth that wakes it into life. ' What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly ? ' and men have prided themselves upon their justice, upon their strict integrity, upon their giving what is due ; and many a man has fought the devil in trying to effect that righteousness for himself. Many have gained that victory, and have gained with it a hardness and inflexibility of character, an inconsiderateness of character and temperament, which have made them to be shunned and not to be followed, much less to be loved. You remember that great Greek citizen who was too just to be tolerated in Athens ? So the Lord our God, who is our Father, does not love the character that is merely just. ' What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to *love mercy* ' . . . and it is that touch of colour and beauty that changes the mere moral exemplar into a follower and brother of Jesus Christ. We shall come to the great words, purity in heart, which might well make us shrink back ; but first of all we have to see that the

Master, the artist of all character, He who is the very likeness of the Father, paints His colours in softened hues. And we read, when we come to His brother's letter, the letter of the man who was brought up in the same home, whose youth was warmed and blessed by the fellowship of Jesus, that mercy glorieth against judgement (Jas. ii. 13).

Now we reach this great fact, that the finest righteousness, the finest integrity, the finest purity, is most merciful. We should not easily have discovered that of ourselves. We find that a righteousness which is strict and censorious is an imperfect righteousness, and when you worship righteousness as an external law, or an external ideal, then your heart may remain all the while uncleansed, may remain unregenerate, a heart in itself proud and finally selfish. When there is need for mercy, when there is need for compassion, you do not go to the man who is known for his absolute inflexibility and justice, you do not go to Cato; but you go to the Christ, to whose side sinners slipped their way, and from whose side the sinners went with radiant hearts and hope and tear-washed souls.

The truth of Christ's great saying is obvious if you turn it round. It is only the merciful who obtain mercy, for it is only the merciless man who has no mercy at your hand. I tell you, you will

forgive wellnigh any sin in this world, but there is one sin you cannot forgive, the sin of mercilessness ; and the word of the parable—for of course it is only a parable—is not too strong, and you feel that the king did rightly, and did the only thing possible, when he handed the merciless man to the tormentors (Matt. xviii. 23-35). For the man who is without mercy there is no forgiveness in your heart, and until he is changed there is no forgiveness, Christ said, in God's heart.

But this word ' merciful ' needs a little change in accent; it means pitiful, compassionate; and that is the first exquisite phase, the first characteristic of God's righteousness which you are asked to take as your own. You are not asked to take the righteousness which man's heart has imagined to be the best, but you are asked to be the children of your Heavenly Father. How often have you heard Him spoken of as the God of righteousness and of justice and of law ; but when you see Christ painting for you His character, when you look to the God of the gospel of Christ, the first aspect of that Father's character that meets you is the kiss of compassion with which He falls on the prodigal's neck ; and until this earth's story is cleansed of all its sadness, our Father's heart will first of all be pitiful, compassionate and tender in its long-suffering. Blessed, with the blessedness that needs no

argument for its support, blessed in themselves because of what they are, the reflex of the Father's spirit, blessed are the pitiful. Let your heart go out in all its compassion, even unto tears—go out for the lost, the wayward, the stricken, the wounded, and the dying. Here you have Christ's great refusal to accept the finest righteousness that there was on earth in His day, the righteousness of the Stoic, the man who stood straight up to life, and defied life by shutting his heart. Pity and compassion were things beneath the Stoic's contempt; they were weaknesses. You must not, said he, let your heart be wounded, you must not let your heart suffer; you must brace yourself, aye, brazen yourself, and the world's tears are not to move you, the world's agony is not to touch your heart, you are to be proof against all. Christ swept this away, the gentle Christ of Nazareth, with that masterful scorn of His, swept it away for ever from the ideals of mankind, when He said, Blessed are the pitiful and the compassionate. 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die—peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die.' That is, as I once heard Dr. Jowett put it, the good man is the righteous man with the bloom on, with the beauty on, with the charm and the tenderness on; not the cold statuesque correctness of a selfish moralist content with his own integrity—for all I know

the last and most damnable selfishness under heaven—but the whole-hearted, warm-hearted motherhood of man that goes out to the little ones, the lost and the poor; the blessedness which has brought sorrow into God's heart, tears to the Father's eyes, and which is melting even our fleshly hearts into the likeness of His own tender strength.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' and both the purity and the vision seem impossible to us. But this ideal of righteousness which Christ is building for us is not an ideal for to-day merely; it is one that will last for ever, will never fade, never wear out. The hunger of the human heart is for a righteousness which assaults the very heavens and claims its kinship with God most High, and nothing else will satisfy us if we are true to ourselves.

We will take the words as quietly and as simply as we can, that we may not leave them hanging in the sky above our heads, but that they may have a central place in our hearts to-day and serve us to-morrow. Remember that it is the purest who are the most pitiful, and then write down what it is to be pure in heart. In the first place, the heart in Hebrew speech and thought is the centre and source of life; it includes everything which makes up

'you,' not only your feeling, but, more than that, your thought and your motive and your will. Now purity of heart does not mean in the first place stainlessness of life; it means that in its last result. Purity of heart in the first place is a very simple thing, not an easy, but a very simple thing. It is singleness of heart. The pure in heart is the opposite to the man who is double-minded, who is always trying to look two ways, and has always an under-purpose in his mind. The single-minded man whose heart is fixed on one object, that man is pure-hearted, clean and clear-thoughted, and that man will rise. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, and no goal will he ever reach; but the single-hearted man will rise, and that is why he shall see God. Christ is sketching for us, let us remember, the character of the citizen of His kingdom. Now a pure-hearted citizen is a man who lives for his city, who dedicates his life to his nation's welfare, to his church's welfare, and he does not use church, nation, or city for his own aggrandisement and glory. The single-hearted man and the pure-hearted man is the man of one purpose, of dedicated service and consecration; and you are single-hearted, pure in heart, if your mind is set with one great deliberate purpose on the honour of God and the welfare of Christ's kingdom. And if that is the central purpose of your

heart, slowly but surely it will bring all the powers of your life not only into harmony with itself, but into allegiance with itself, and your life will become a harmony in which the work is natural and the hardest task becomes straight and simple.

Such people see God now, as well as to-morrow. To see God is not to see Him with any outward vision, but to see God is to know God, and such men know Him now. When the heart becomes pure, cleansed from ulterior motives, from double-dealing and double-mindedness, then the windows of the soul are clean and the vision is unstained. When you meet that man you meet a man who knows God's mind in the things of daily life, God's mind in the things of the Church, in the matters of his business, in the affairs of the city and of the state; that man can read history, and he can sometimes read the future; he is one of those whose lives turn upon the poles of truth and who live in fellowship with the Eternal Life. Blessed are the single-hearted, for they to-day see God.

The climax is reached in the last of these beatitudes, and this one may have surprised you because of this position which it occupies. It is obviously the climax, and yet you would have placed one of the others at the top, if you had been arranging matters; but we always find our mistake when we enter into the Master's thought.

Christ has shown you the growth of character in its tender beauty and its wondrous strength; but the end, aim, purpose, and result of it is not that the character in a man should be intact and clean and righteous, but that his life should be the life that overflows with beneficence. 'Blessed are the peacemakers' is a benediction not upon those who bring quarrels to an end, or make wars to cease—that they are blessed goes without saying—but Christ's word here is a far deeper word than that. 'Peacemaker' means maker of 'peace.' The word is Greek, but the thought is Hebrew, and both in Hebrew and Greek it means far more than it means with us. Peace to the Hebrew and to Christ meant life in its abundance and its wealth. The Jewish greeting to you to-day is 'Peace be with you,' and therein he wishes you life's fullness. The progress of thought by which the word has come to mean that is clear. When there is war nothing can grow, nothing can be built, you cannot make up life's wealth in a state of warfare. It means wealth as contrasted with 'illth,' and blessed, said Christ, are those who create peace.

Now you cannot make a grain of sand, you cannot create an atom of matter, and in those low realms of physical being you are absolutely helpless; you may put materials together, but nothing can you create. But in the higher realms of life you

can create, and blessed are they who make peace. You will see that this is the climax: they that mourn are conscious of the world's need and sin, and they most desire to make peace between God and man, which is the only foundation upon which life can be upbuilt in its pleasantness. Christ's followers are the inheritors of the earth, and it is they who have to make the new earth. They who are pitiful of earth's misery and need and sorrow will be moved to make the peace, the plenty, and the wealth which they miss. Those who are single-hearted and pure in all their intentions are those alone who will serve the commonwealth, and not serve themselves. So it is your business, with the Christian character God has given you, to set yourself in this world to build, wide and deep, the commonwealth of man and the kingdom of God. So shall you be the sons of God, for it is God's work. God were a useless God, though He were perfect in character, if that perfection of character did not lead to the creation of blessedness; and you are not only to have His likeness, but you are to have His spirit and by His spirit be led, His spirit of beneficence; and you, like Him, are to bear the sorrow, go through all the long labour, and endure in all patience, that there may come to pass at last upon this earth a city of God, the commonwealth of man and the Sovereignty of God.

VI

THE LIFE OF GRACE

Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.
MATT. v. 41.

THIS is one of four sayings in one paragraph which have caused as much perplexity as any sayings of the Master. 'Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you . . . whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' That is difficult. 'If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.' That is not easy. 'Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.' What does that mean? 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.' And that is quite impossible. So these sayings of the Master cause, and always will cause, much perplexity. It was His way. He would rather have men think than be correctly informed. But I have chosen this saying, not because it is a perplexity, but because it is full of light, and it will be for us, if we interpret it,

evermore one of the keys of life unto the end.

Whatever is the right interpretation of these sayings, one thing is quite clear: the Master is not giving us new rules. He never gave any rules at all. He is not giving us new laws. That was not His method. He is protesting against the life that is governed by law. He is protesting against the foot-rule and all other rules—'an eye for an eye'; and His first illustration is taken from the same domain as the rule He mentions. 'So far are you from being bound by that rule, "an eye for an eye," that I tell you—to carry on the illustration—if any one smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' But when a man did smite Jesus on the right cheek, He did not turn the other, as you will read in the story of His trial. We should be stultifying the Master's life, and we should be directly contradicting His teaching, if we erected these examples of His into rules. They are not rules. They are extreme examples of principles; and He is trying to lead us to the life that is not governed by rules, that is not governed by laws; He is revealing the spirit of a higher life, on a higher plane. 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away,' is a parabolic saying which, if you made it into a rule, would wreck society in a month. It would do far more harm to the man who

received than it would do to the man who gave. To carry that literally into practice is forbidden by the supreme governing principle of the kingdom of God—the principle of love. You must not do anything to a man that would harm him, make him a worse man ; and to pauperize those who ask of you is a cruelty that is altogether and always to be condemned. It is forbidden by the law of life of Him who makes His rain to descend upon the just and the unjust, but who does no harm to any one. These sayings of the Master, then, are illustrations, examples, of the deep underlying principle of His own spirit ; we want to win that principle for ourselves and we shall be henceforth free. I want us afresh to realize our liberty as the sons of God.

To feel the full force of this word of Jesus, we must place it in its historic connexion. Here is the old Jewish law : ' An eye for an eye.' It seems to us brutal : it seems to us a low kind of ideal. This shows how Christ has lifted the standard of human judgement. When it was first imposed it was strictly and in the fullest sense a moral law, and a law of tender mercy. It seems to you to be a word that embodies the worst feelings of the human heart. But when it was first given it was a word that restrained the worst feelings of the human heart. In the olden days, before law-givers like Moses placed

constraint upon the human spirit, if a man suffered any injury, he would not stick at an *equivalent*. No : he would have his knife in the heart of his enemy, and then in the heart of his enemy's wife, and then in the heart of every child his enemy had. ' An eye for an eye ' was not enough for him. Limitless, unfettered, and boundless went out human malice, hatred, and revenge ; and it was not the embodying of this hate in legal form, but an extreme expression of the sheer justice of pure morality, when the lawgiver came and said : No, this is the law to which you must bend and to which you must constrain your hearts in their brutality. Justice shall be done, but no more than justice. ' An eye for an eye ' : you shall have a strict equivalent. And that seemed very merciful to the wrongdoer in those days, and very absurd to the wronged.

Now it is from this point that Jesus moves on in His teaching. ' Except your righteousness exceed that righteousness, ye shall in no wise enter into My kingdom.' You will notice that it is not enough to be a more righteous man than the Pharisee. ' Except you exceed in righteousness the Scribes and Pharisees '—that is not what Jesus said. You would find it very hard in the same school as the Pharisee to exceed him in his scrupulousness and his zeal. Jesus would not be

satisfied even if you did exceed his achievements and do more than the Pharisee. That is not what Jesus wants at all. It is not that you are to go one yard further than the Pharisee has gone. Your righteousness itself is to be a righteousness altogether higher, of a different kind. You are not to beat the Pharisee at his own game. You are to run your race on a higher level, in a higher realm. 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,' except it belong to something far higher than that of the footrule, than that of measurement, which was the righteousness of the Pharisee, you have not even entered My kingdom. How much shall I do? How far shall I go? How far does my duty extend? That is the question of the Pharisee in every age: How much must I do? And is it not sometimes the question of our hearts? We who have been raised to another age and into another world of thought, are we not, as our bodies are, even yet troubled by survivals from the lower? and does not the old righteousness still haunt our mind? and is there not in every Christian heart and life at some time or another the old Pharisaic spirit: How far am I bound to go—am I obliged to go?

Now Jesus has put His position with the utmost clearness into this epigram. The larger part of this great fifth chapter of Matthew is summed

up in this wonderful word. We must not for a moment confine ourselves to the literal picture which Jesus had in His mind. You are aware that it was the custom in those days for the Roman soldiers to commandeer any natives who were about the country through which they were passing and make them carry their baggage for a certain distance. It was something answering in spirit to the old press-gang of a hundred years ago, though not quite ; in spirit it was the same thing. The great dominating Roman armies needed carriers, and wherever they went they seized the man on the spot, who had to carry the load a certain measured distance. That is the custom to which the words of Jesus refer : the men were obliged to go a certain measured distance. Now, said Jesus, that is the old religion. That is a very good picture of the old morality. That is a very good picture of human life under moral obligations. We are compelled to go one mile—the law compels us ; duty compels us ; there is constraint. We are not compelled by force, but we are all of us under compulsion for one mile. You dare not come into this society unless you have gone a certain length in common decency of behaviour and of life. The very neighbours among whom you live, the traditions among which you have been brought up, the traditions that are in your blood, the compulsions of the

morality of the day, all these things compel for the first mile. There is so much of life which is summed up in the word 'duty,' and until we have accomplished that much there is nothing else possible, nor is there anything to be said. And when we have done it, it is the danger of our hearts to pride ourselves upon the doing of it. It is recorded of a rich young ruler that on hearing the Ten Commandments read he might after each one audibly respond, 'I never did that,' and go home in the glow of conscious rectitude. Yet he was conscious, it is said, that, having done all these, he had not begun the way of life. 'Thou shalt not . . .' lays constraint, 'Thou shalt' lays compulsion upon us; and what we are compelled to do does not count. There is a mistake which we are always making. Morality does not count. It is taken for granted, as the air you breathe is taken for granted. If you are not a moral man, then out you go. And to be moral, straight, clean, to pay one's debts, fulfil one's relationships, is simply common decency, and it does not count from the standpoint of Christianity. Morality is essential; so is the first mile; both are necessary, both compulsory; but Christ counts them not. Morality is as the foundations of life, to be well and truly laid—beneath the surface; but we do not live amid the foundations. Christ

builds our house—our religion, wherein to live. But the fatal danger of man in all times has been, having reached the position of morality, to fold his hands and think that he has accomplished all.

No: more than once Christ said, in different ways, 'When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."' One of His sayings, this, that strikes deeply into the human heart unto the dividing of the thoughts and the laying bare the intents and purposes of the mind. If the word 'duty' limits us, may the word perish.

So the first mile is what humanity before Christ had so far accomplished, and what has been taken for granted ever since, and is taken for granted in these days; and any man of sincere heart despises himself when he has not to the best of his ability fulfilled these commandments under which we all live. They are the inevitable, from which we cannot escape. When we have fulfilled them, let us be glad because we are healthy: but there is to be no pride, no false self-congratulation, no folding of the hands to sleep, no thought but that we have just taken our places equipped for the race. It is the second mile that counts; it is the second mile that is Christianity. It is the mile that you go without being compelled to go. It is the things you do out of your own heart.

It is the height you climb for the love of it. It is the virtue you win for the delight of it. It is the unexpected, the unexacted, the unasked. It is that that counts and lifts you : and he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the giants of a former race, the most immaculate of ancient types. He who rises with free heart into the air of liberty has begun other miles that are never counted, but reach out limitlessly through all eternity.[1]

Now that is the position that I want us to dwell on. The first mile is the mile we are compelled to go. Some miles are English and some are Welsh : if you have been in Wales you know the difference. In other words, some ages have one measurement and some ages have another. The man who lives up to the standard of his age, up to that which he is compelled to do by the common opinion of the society around him, by his church or his club, or whatever it may be, that man has gone the first mile. Then everything else he does begins to count. Do we see the deep emphatic truth of it ? Nothing is of worth in the realm of righteousness that is not voluntary. Virtue which is virtue by compulsion is not virtue. That to which we are driven by anything, however unconscious the driving be to us, is not virtue. It is only that which we choose of our own free will which is really our own selves. That

[1] See Note B, p. 209.

which we are forced to by fear or law or compulsion, is not our real self ; it is only the foundations on which the building is afterwards reared. It is when you choose the higher for the love of it, make it your own and take it to your heart, it is then that you are really virtuous and are really entering into the spirit of God's life.

The best illustration of this truth is taken from school life. When a boy is at school he does what he is told to do. He may be a good scholar or a poor one. Take the boy who does what he is told to do, and does it well. He is a boy—this boy I am thinking of—who has brains if he likes to use them, and under his master's direction and bidding he uses them. When he leaves school, or when he leaves college, and when from the college he goes, let us say, into the ministry, then is the critical hour. Has he done what he has been doing simply because he has been made to do it by his teachers and examiners, or is the love of it in him ? The future will depend upon the answer to that. So far you cannot tell ; whether he is a student or not you do not know ; whether he is zealous in the search after truth you do not know ; and it is in the first perilous years of his ministry, when he can do what he likes, that that man as a minister is either damned or made. When he gets his liberty and can go forth with

whole heart and mind into the vast land of research, and win deep, deep down into the mass of truth, not because he is obliged to, but because he must in answer to the spirit of the God within him, then that man is saved. If he refuses, he is lost.

It is the second mile that counts, and only the second mile, that which you are not compelled to do, the mile you are not compelled to go. This will throw light upon the very strange paragraph with which Christ closes what we call this chapter. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy'—that is the expression of the old Jewish spirit—'but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye *more than others*? Do not even the Gentiles the same?' Now at first sight Jesus seems to depreciate the common and glorious possession of love, the relation of love to those who are ours in this world, friendship and family life in all its manifoldness. It had been considered enough to be friendly to those who were our friends, and this Jesus seems for the

moment to depreciate, but not for a moment is He really so doing. On this it was His custom to lay the greatest stress, making it the inner sanctum of life. There we have our life to live, and there we have our life to live in its fullness, packing all we can into it of helpfulness to our friends, all we can give to them, answering all the calls of friendship in its manifold relations: that must we do; and there is limitless possibility of service and of joy and glory there.[1] But what Jesus says here is this: You will find that all decent people are kind to their friends. The Gentiles are so to their brethren, and if you only do this you do nothing *more than others. Christianity is doing more*—doing more than we are bound to do; going beyond what we are expected to do; going beyond what it is easy or even natural to do. You are to learn in the spirit of your Father so to think even of those—if you have any such—whom you call your enemies, so to think of them in all friendliness and goodwill that you can even pray for them the best prayers you are able. That is the spirit of Christ and the spirit of your Father, and you are asked to live as the children of your Father.

In other words, Christ is here preaching what Paul calls the great doctrine of liberty, the liberty of the sons of God. 'We are not under

[1] *The Unseen Life*, Part I (H. R. Allenson).

law, but under grace.' Have we realized the fascination, the delirium of freedom which is in those words? We are not under law. The law which used to bind us when we were schoolboys binds us no longer. We are risen, if we are Christ's people, to something higher, to something nobler far: we are under grace. What is grace? Grace is that which moves God to do so much that you will never know how much He has done. Grace is that which moves God to give you more than food and clothing. Grace is that which moves God to give you His Only-Beloved, and with Him freely to give you all things. Grace is that which has snapped for ever all limitations to God's redeeming love and mercy. Grace is that in God's heart out of which there springs everlasting benevolence and benediction. That is to be in your heart, and your living, your asking, your giving is to be limitless, boundless, and free. We are under grace; there are no limits to a life that is moved from within, not driven from without; we are born into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

'I never transgressed a commandment of thine,' said the elder brother. He stood there in the presence of his father and thought that he was perfect—'I never transgressed a commandment of thine.' 'That does not count, my son. Commandments are obligations, and what you

are obliged to do does not count.' He had never a kiss for his brother, never a kiss for his father, never had he entered into his father's love or thought or trouble. 'I never transgressed a commandment of thine.' 'Yes, but what did you ever do that you were not asked to do? My boy, did you ever do a thing I did not command you? Did you ever go beyond my bare word? Did you ever greet me with any surprise? Did you bring me any gifts I did not require? Did you ever go beyond the mere work of a slave driven by the word of his master?'

It is the 'beyond' that counts. It is the 'beyond' that is the perfect life, the life of liberty; and so we are to enter into that life, and to learn that we can be perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect, not in the height of achievement, but in the motives that move us and in the spirit of our life. And you will recognize when you look at all the splendour of achievement of the Free Churches of our land, and all that Methodism and the Churches of Christ in all the lands have done over and beyond what they were bound to do, that the spirit of Christ has triumphed, is triumphing in our world. The life of your Father and the spirit of your Master are to be yours, victorious in you until you cease to count the miles, until you spend all you have of power, talent, time, and love,

even all you are, and ceaselessly, tirelessly in this needy world 'give to him that asketh of thee' thy own life-blood.

> If you loved only what were worth your love,
> Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you;
> Make the low nature better by your throes!
> Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

VII

THE LIFE OF PEACE

Consider the lilies, how they grow.— LUKE xii. 27

HE was standing among the lilies, the glorious purple lilies of the East, which overtop the wheat and make an Eastern cornfield one of earth's fairest sights; not our little lilies did He mean: the word He uses covers a large family of glorious, flaming flowers.

I want my sermon, among other things, to be a personal confession of my inmost and central faith. If there is one saying of the Master which is always with me, which is always tingeing my thought, which, however slack I may be in its application, has yet wrought something in the method and manner of my thought and prayer and bearing, it is this. There is no passage in all Scripture that comes nearer to me than the passage which I read to you as our lesson (Luke xii. 13-34), of which this is one of the shining pinnacles of thought; and there is no passage in Scripture in which the Master more clearly confesses to you the secret of His own life, in which

He so clearly gives to you the secret of that life which He learned to live on earth, as we have to learn, that life which He learned to live with His Father and our Father.

I know, and I rejoice to know, that when the Master speaks to us as He speaks here, He has led us very far from many of the tortured experiences, and from many of the tortuous thoughts which have sometimes passed for an expression of the Christian religion. Remember, there are many religions besieging our hearts and possibly garrisoning our hearts, but they are not all Christian. There are methods of thought, habits of thought, views of life, philosophies of God and Christ, which are not Christian. Our only Master and our only Ruler is the Mind that was in Christ Jesus Himself.

What, then, is Jesus speaking about? At first sight He seems to be speaking of food and raiment; but if we look carefully into the passage we shall see that, starting there, He rises to the higher and the eternal life, the life of our real selves. He is commanding us to have done with anxiety. The old translation lingers in your mind, 'Take no thought for your life'; and as you know, that translation is not a mistake, or rather, was not a mistake in 1611, because at that time 'Take no thought' meant what you have in the

Revised Version, 'Be not anxious.' All forethought is necessary, but it is forethought, as Dr. Maclaren has said, that can most fully exclude foreboding. The ravens would not be fed unless they fetched their food, and Jesus is in no sense speaking words that would at all lessen our industry, at all lessen our power or need of work, but He is giving us those thoughts which shall make all work sure, aye, and make it divine.

But I want to point out that after speaking to us so about those matters He goes on in His argument of thought. He has bidden you consider the ravens, reminding you that the God who made the ravens made the ravens' food, and the God who made you has made your food; otherwise He would be ashamed to be called your God. And then He goes on, 'What is the use of anxiety? Which of you *by being anxious* can do anything at all? If, then, ye are not able to do that which is least' (the least things are those about which He has been speaking) 'why are ye anxious concerning the rest?' He is lifting us now out of the lower realm of thought and need into the higher kingdom of the spiritual and the eternal life. When He comes to speak of the lilies, He is speaking of our spiritual life. He proposes to clothe His people more gloriously than Solomon was clothed. This can scarcely be applied to material clothing! The gospel comes, not from

Paris, but from Galilee. He repeats the argument afterwards and makes the same step upward. He reminds us that the nations of the world are ever involved in a feverish search after the lesser and lower things of mortal and physical life and enjoyment, and tells us that our life is a higher one, lifting us at once to it: 'Howbeit, seek ye His kingdom,' and that is the realm in which our thoughts are to move this morning. Thus, when He speaks to us concerning the lilies, He is speaking on the higher level, concerning the higher and more important things of life.

Here, then, you have the Master's bidding, necessary for Methodists above all other people; possibly more necessary for the Methodism that has passed or is passing than for the Methodism of to-day. But errors in thought, in perspective, and in emphasis, linger and haunt our minds, and make untrue our vision and our work, even after they have lost their position of sovereignty; and it is always necessary for us then to write it down, this great calm word of the Master, necessary for us above all people, that in the matter of salvation anxiety is out of place.

He gathers His disciples about Him. 'He said unto His disciples, "Therefore I say unto you—unto you to whom are revealed secrets which others are not yet able, are not yet fit, to

understand—be not anxious."' How far, then, has He led us, as I said a moment ago, from many of the tortured experiences and many of the tortuous thoughts which have passed for an expression of the Christian religion! Let us remember that while we have one Christ, while we have one God, and while we have one Father, it is possible for us to think concerning Him and concerning salvation in such diverse ways that we may really belong, not to one society, and not to one family, but to diverse companies who have not been instructed in like manner. And Christ is ever striving to raise us, as He strove to raise His first disciples, above all poorer forms of thinking, into the fellowship of His own calm, serene, and invincible faith. Many a soul has been blighted, many a life has been fevered, by indiscreet and unchristian methods, questions, and harassments; and within the Christian Church there have often been methods pursued as far removed from the culture of the lily, as far removed from the true culture of the soul, as they could possibly be. And if you read the Gospels with this thought in your mind, you will be refreshed to find how, while Christ is very urgent about the need to turn from the world that is evil and to enter into His kingdom, still, that having taken place, there is no more room for anxiety. Anxiety is unbelief, anxiety is lack of

faith, anxiety is distrust. Be as strenuous, as loyal, as bold, as urgent, as eager as you will. Face the facts; lull not yourself to sleep by shutting your eyes to the dangers. Be fully aware that the Christian life is an Alpine walk, and the highest summits are yet in the clouds. Keep quite clearly in your consciousness the fact that there is sin to be fought, in yourself and in the world. But remember that we have a Christ who is an invincible Saviour, and never let your life be spoiled by that most shameful of disloyalties, the forgetfulness that you have a Father.

Consider the lilies, then. Do they worry? Would not anxiety destroy their bloom? On how many lives have you looked, and there is no bloom? On how many sincere, earnest, zealous, devoted Christian lives have you looked, and never been refreshed, being made rather to feel the burden of it, the difficulty and the toil? Consider the lilies. They have arrived; God's thought in them has been perfected.

Jesus gathers us—amid the vexed theologies of man, the anxious strivings of India, the dread and dark of Africa, the fevered lust of Britain, amid the assaults of hell, and all the hate of the enemies of the human soul—'Consider the lilies; in spite of all, there they are. In spite of all, they

are perfect. In spite of all, though they last but for a day, God has thought of them, and so God's thoughts prevail even here.' God's thoughts will prevail even here, in me. Why, then, should I be anxious? I am not the work of my own hands; I am not the sculpture of my own thought; and I know that He will perfect that which I have committed to His charge. It was He who 'thought of me, and so I grew.' Salvation is not a work of toil, an endeavour, an achievement; it is a growth, and they who worry least grow most. They who are most sure that this earth is a glorious place to grow in, grow best. They who trust the God who made them and who made the laws of growth, they come to fullest bloom and perfection.

Then there is this parable for us in the lilies, that whereas all things grow according to the laws of Him who made them, and whereas God cares so much about beauty that He will clothe the very grass of the field with beauty, though it perish in a day, much more shall He when He works His highest work—the work for which all else is—much more shall He work out His work unto perfect beauty.

Consider the lilies again—consider how they grow. A scientist will tell you that if you take

the simplest form of physical life, that from which all physical life grows—protoplasm—and examine it, you will find that it is the same in the lily as in the daisy ; and yet, if you can tell me which is the lily and which is the daisy—though no scientist, with his most powerful microscope or his most powerful test, can show any difference —I will tell you, he will tell you, that from this there will come the lily, from that there will come the daisy, and you will never get the daisy from this, and you will never get the lily from that ; so that, utterly alike though they seem to be, in the same earth, from one you will inevitably get the lily, from the other inevitably you will get the daisy. The difference is in that invisible and indescribable thing we call life. There is the lily-life, and there is the daisy-life. They will each of them take what they want from earth, what they want from air, what they want from light, and the thought of God which is in each will work out its perfect salvation. So in you there is that thought, which is Christ, the hope of glory, and for you there is soil and atmosphere fitting ; and all you have to do is to live in the right atmosphere, and the result is as inevitable as anything in the world of nature. God does not bungle in the lower realms of life, which do not so much matter. God will not bungle in the supreme life, which does matter. God set out to create

from the first the fadeless lilies of the eternal garden of the Lord. He will succeed, and He will succeed the better without your anxiety. He will succeed the better the more simply you surrender yourself to the laws of health and the powers of grace and love.

Here, then, you have life's philosophy according to Jesus Christ. Here you have the life He lived —He lived in that name, 'Father.' All life was interpreted to Him thereby. The sunshine of the summer, and the winds of the winter, the sun and the rain and all that makes up life, was to Him the will of His Father; and life for us is to be what it was for Him. There are many things that are sad, many things that are evil, but there shall be a day when these shall not be; and it is even now permitted, it is even now necessary, that we should sometimes regard life apart from these things, in its supreme meaning and its supreme consummation. It is our privilege to live the natural, utterly simple, boundlessly joyous and healthful life of those who have the Christ-life within them, and the atmosphere and light of the truth without them.

The atmosphere? 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are reverend, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be

any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*.' Live there, and the Christ within you shall meet the Christ without you, and the paintings of the lily shall be nothing to the glory of your life, as the glory of Solomon was nothing to the lily bloom. The atmosphere, the life that suits us? It is the life that Christ lived, the reflex of the spirit of the Father who lives only to serve, to give, to surrender Himself; these are the habits that are the habits of health for us. We have not to spend one moment in anxiety about our own souls, but to fling ourselves into the great toil and glorious work—'Seek ye first the kingdom.' That does not mean that you are to seek your place in it, your comfort in it. It means that you are to seek the success, the glory, the victory of His kingdom. Work for it, be therein utterly involved and engrossed, and all things that make up true life shall be added unto you by the Father's ministry.

You tell me that the lilies are very gorgeous, and you do not like to compare yourself to the lilies. Well, then, even the lilies do not tell all life's story. Listen to the mosses; they are modest enough.

THE SONG OF THE MOSSES.[1]

We're such merry little fellows
In our dapper greens and yellows,
And the north wind with his bellows
Cannot blow our tints away:
We are bright in brown September,
We are green in grey November,
And are blithe in black December
As in April or in May.

Then we're on such friendly footing
With our neighbours, always shooting
Up, and spreading out and rooting
Where they like to have us grow;
Where we wrap a cosy jacket
Round some old tree trunk, and pack it
That the hardest frost can't crack it
When the winds of winter blow;

Where some slender rootlet creeping,
Or some tender seedling peeping,
Calls for shelter and safe keeping
In a stern unfriendly world;
Where some flower is proud to rank us,
And with scattered bloom to prank us,
For our soft background to thank us,
As we lie about it curled;

[1] William Griffiths, *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, September, 1897.

Where we deck the ragged edges
Of unsightly rocky wedges,
Jutting out along the ledges
Of some spring within the dell,
Till the laughing waters, brimming
With delight at their fair trimming,
Give us back our pictures swimming
On their mirror in the well;

Where the linnet meets her lover,
Where the dormouse seeks a cover,
Where the anxious, wheeling plover
Leaves her eggs in faith and fear.—
Is a carpet asked? We grow one.
Is a shelter sought? We show one.
What we can we grudge to no one,
And are happy all the year.

If you'd banish cares and crosses,
And forget your loads and losses,
Come and live among the mosses,
Till you learn their merry ways:
Living just as people should do,
That is, just as people would do,
Did they do the good they could do,
Without thought of pay or praise.

VIII

THE CHRISTIAN

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.—MATT. xi. 29.

THE figure of the yoke in Christ's day had become a figure of speech to denote the relation of a disciple to his master. Christ is here using this expression with this meaning, bidding men take His view of life. In other words, the two parts of the text mean the same thing, and after the Hebrew fashion of thought He parallels His first word with a second of like significance: 'Take My yoke upon you' means 'Learn of Me.'

But it will be useful for a moment to look into the figure, that we may see the light which it casts upon life. It will teach us how to take life. The yoke, as you know, was a wooden implement fitting on the backs or the necks of two oxen, to which were attached the cords that drew the plough. If the yoke were ill-fitting, the work would be difficult; if the yoke were easy, it was then the easiest possible way of drawing the plough. Now life is just the great task of dragging our own

burden, the burden of our own duty, responsibility, work ; and the difference between folk lies here : that some know how best, most easily, and therefore most perfectly, to draw their burden and accomplish their day's work, whereas others have always got ill-fitting harness. Some have not learned to draw a furrow straight ; others are heavy laden, not because they have heavier responsibilities or heavier tasks, but because they are ill-equipped to their task, not having learned of any supreme master of life. In the idleness of our thinking, we sometimes speak of the yoke as if it were a burden. It is precisely the opposite ; it is that which enables us to drag the burdens, to carry life through most easily. If the oxen had not got the yoke, to draw the plough would be almost sheer impossibility. It would, at any rate, often be torture. The yoke is, then, the best invention for making work effective ; and so the yoke of the master, whoever he be, whom we choose, is meant to be that to which we fit life's task, and work, and toil, that we may the more adroitly, the more easily, the more swiftly, the more surely accomplish it.

This, then, leads us to ask the question which has been in my mind for a long time, and which I want in some measure to answer—What is it to be a Christian ? Not ' What is it to *become*

a Christian ? ' but ' What is it to *be* a Christian '— a Christian fully, a Christian in the whole bearing and relation of life ? If we are reasonable people, we shall strive to make our life reasonable from end to end. We shall strive to have a central power and motive. We shall not try to drag our burdens first one way and then another. We shall seek to see life steadily, to see it whole, to be equal to it, never to be unnerved by it, never to give in to wrongful depression, never to fail in life's pressure, and to carry through joy and sorrow, through sunshine and through dark, a fine temper, a settled mind, and a quiet heart.

What is it, then, to be such a one ? What is it to be a Christian ? We often speak of a man being ' a true Christian,' when he displays some Christian virtues—when he lives the life that touches our hearts to admiration. But I want us to notice this, that there are many people who are Christian supremely here or there, but not in the whole of their life. You find them living heroically, with the true spirit of Christ ; and yet you will find them with clouded minds, depressed, lacking buoyancy, lacking the inspiration of high views. On the other hand, you will find people who have remarkably fine views of truth, who have all the assets of a buoyant spirit, but yet who do not inspire us with any sense of being near the Christ life when we live near them. Now

to be a Christian wholly is to unite both virtues, and I want us carefully to consider this matter.

First, then, if we are to take our place among those who are Christians after Christ's manner, we should seek, and keep, and develop Christ's view of life. We should win and keep Christ's thought, the truth wherein and whereby He lived. Many a heroic heart lives far less joyously, far less triumphantly, and far less steadily than need be, because there is absent the knowledge of Christ's truth. In many a pagan land (to give the extreme example), there have been some who have lived in the Christ spirit, but they have been without the mind that was in Christ. Now life consists of two things, and the first that we are concerned with now is the atmosphere in which we dwell. We want to live in the centre of the Christian life, and that shall not only make our hearts joyous, but it shall make our hearts pure, and then strong, and then immortal. So if we are to learn to take Christ's yoke upon us, we must steadily learn of Him, learn to think as He thought, learn to view life as He viewed life. His philosophy is to be ours, and we are to say to Him 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.'

Now Christ had one key to life's interpretation —the name of 'Father.' He lived within the Fatherhood of God. He let that interpret the

world. He let that interpret His own heart. He bade that interpret life to us. He dismissed the dread, the fears, the horrors which some men had framed for themselves as a dwelling-place of thought. He brought us within the sanction and within the inspiration of the Fatherhood of God. He made life centre there. It began for Him, it abode for Him, it ended for Him there. It was the lesson He learned, as we are to learn it, in boyhood; and His Father's house was to Him the best loved spot of earth in His boyish days. He ended His earthly days in His Father's house: 'Into Thy hands I commend My spirit!' and to do the will of His Father was through all the years His life-blood, His meat and His drink. Now do we dwell there? Do we greet ourselves day by day with the name of the Father? Do we order our days from this centre? Life is passing with its years swiftly away. It is given us now to learn the habits of eternity, and if the habits of eternity are to be learned anywhere they are to be learned here, and this is the first and simplest and widest of all the truths of Christianity. Are we dwelling here? Are we learning it? Are we living unto it? Are we becoming, not only the disciples, but the brothers and sisters of Christ, whom He greets with His own name?

Standing there, at the centre of Christ's thought, life will become ordered for us. We

shall find that our own life becomes transfigured with other meanings than those of earth. We shall understand why we so often go unsatisfied. We shall know that we are too great to tarry in any satisfaction of to-day. We shall know that we are destined to the upward life, the reaches of the eternal will allure us and fascinate us, and we shall know that we are called, called by the heart of the Eternal Love, that we are pilgrims of eternity, 'conscripts of the mighty dream.' We shall bear ourselves as those who have learned a secret, each for himself. We have looked into the meaning of God's work. We are the meaning of God's work revealed to ourselves. For the sake of us He made all things; for the sake of us He upholds all things; for the sake of us He bears all things; and we shall walk through life smitten with a strange surprise. Then life's difficulties, problems, sin and death will take on new meanings also, and we shall not think of these things by themselves, but shall think of them as they affect the Father. We shall see that sin in this world is man's refusal to be God's child, that sin in this world is man's blundering into a wrong path, that sin in this world is man's refusal of the one chance of divinity; and that sin in this world, much as it may strike our hearts with pain, strikes His heart with a pain beyond death. God lives through

Calvary. Death itself cannot still the pain there is in that Heart, and Christ rose again that He might take up His life, the fellowship of the endless suffering of God. We shall know that sin's interpretation is not manward, but Godward, and Christ will have let us into Calvary's secret, God crucified in His own universe for the love which He has towards those who may yet become His children. Earth's travail and earth's history will be to us God's effort to call men into His own life, to give them out of His grace Christ's life itself.

Therefore in the first place to be a Christian we must think out Christ's thoughts, dwell where Christ dwells, trace out His thoughts which all radiate from this one centre, bear ourselves in this manner, move and have our being in His world: here we must think. We are the interpreters of God: He is speaking to His children, and His children must understand. The first part of the Christian's character is that he looks upon things from Christ's point of view. He takes Christ's philosophy, and he lives with the Father.

In the second place, the Christian is the man who has the Christ life for his own. There is to be the life within, dwelling, growing in the right atmosphere. It is not enough to have the atmosphere and to dwell in the midst of the truths. The deep essential reality is the Christ life within.

Christ brought that life in its fullness into this world, and it is granted to every one who will open his heart thereto. Christ lives that He may live in us. In a word, the life of Christ is the life of love, of unselfishness, of surrender, service and sacrifice, of which we have so often spoken ; the life that is dedicated, consecrated, devoted ; the life that is the life of obedience to the Father, of loving surrender in His service, of devotion to Him, and then to His. We read Christ's life in these gospel pages ; we see its full explication on Calvary, when He surrendered Himself once and for ever to man and man's salvation ; and that is the life to which we are called, that is the life-blood of God, that is the spirit in which God our Father lives and breathes and has His being, the life of grace in which He gives Himself without counting the cost, the life which He has sent through Christ to us that we may become His sons and His daughters.

Therefore when we read the Gospels we find that Christ is always urging us to live for His kingdom, to live with all that we are for the up-building of His kingdom, which is the kingdom of the family of God, the kingdom of the new humanity. We are called to the life that is the only life worth a moment's thought, the life of patriotism in the Fatherland of God, in the Home-land of man that is yet to be, free from stain, free

from poverty, from sin, from shame, the land that is yet to be as God would have it be, where men shall live full-blooded, full-breathed, full-hearted lives by His grace and will. We are called to live, to work, to give, to die for that; and wherever in this earth's Church of Christ you are, there is the meaning of your religion. Give yourself there, and you live the Christ life.

Now you see my meaning. Life is unbalanced until you get these two complements: the true Christ life of service, of sacrifice, of surrender, fed and nourished and upheld, stilled, strengthened and stayed by the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, by the heart's calmness of outlook, by the calm and surety of faith, the faith that sees the invisible realities and realizes God. And it is because we take the one and develop it without the other that so many fail, and falter, and die. We are to dwell in the great thoughts which Christ has given us; and however arduous our life, however strenuous, utterly as we may give ourselves in service, they shall make that life strong, steady, and triumphant to the end.

Lastly, we add, drawing it from our text, this parallel thought. The figure of the yoke suggests, when you remember it was laid upon the

necks of two oxen, the idea of comradeship. I do not want to press the figure, but it suggests the truth—not dependent upon the figure, but self-evident—the truth that the Christian is the friend of Christ. We are not alone. We do not bear life's burden alone. Life's responsibility is not ours alone ; it is Christ's. The kingdom for which we live is not our kingdom ; it is God's. Christ's toil is to bring this universe into the obedience of the Cross, and that is ours. By the surrender of our own lives, and by victory in others, we are to aid Christ ; life for the Christian is not only to be Christ's life within us, lived where Christ lived it, in His thought and beneath the glorious Fatherhood ; it is to be all that *with* Christ. Christ has opened His life, His kingdom, His dwelling-place to us. He has given His Father to us, but He has not withdrawn. 'My brothers and my sisters,' He says to us, 'I am with you, even unto the end of the world.' And when the end of the world is reached and the next world dawns in its perfectness, you and I and Christ, who have travailed together, shall sit down at the table of the Father, well content. Let that comradeship be ours now, and we shall realize its fullness, not now, but hereafter.

PART III

IX

THE SAVIOUR

A certain man had two sons.—LUKE xv. 11.

THIS parable is the greatest thing in all the teaching of Jesus. If one may be allowed even the suspicion of a comparison for the moment, even as a piece of work—even as one piece of work definitely done—of all the works done on earth it is one of the most consummately amazing. Men of mighty minds have wrestled to express the highest truths, have wrestled to win them, to comprehend them, and then to tell them. But here, with a simplicity that is inimitable, with an art that it were hopeless to copy, with a success that is deeper than we have ever suspected, the Carpenter of Nazareth reveals, if we have the eye to see them, the highest truths concerning God, so that they may be understanded by the simplest mind.

There was a theologian once who preached a sermon to explain why his theory of the atonement did not agree with the parable of the prodigal son. If your theory of the Atonement does not agree with the parable of the prodigal son, bury it, and say no more about it. In

God's name don't preach a sermon to explain it.

But, you ask me, wonderful as the parable is, wonderful as it is that with so few strokes He has limned for ever the features of these three men so that you know them better than you know your nearest neighbour, and that they hang for ever in the gallery of the world's pictures—wonderful though it be, is it worth while to ask you to go over the story yet again? Is there anything new, fresh, that we may win from it, or have I any manner or method by which I may make what is old live fresh and new? But I believe that the Spirit of the living God, who liveth and speaketh to-day, can always reveal new truth, and that it is His daily purpose to reveal new truth to those who are poor in spirit and have the open heart.

Before we can see anything we must, as always, take off our coloured spectacles. We have given this parable, in our usual manner, the wrong name; we have called it the parable of the prodigal son, and the prodigal is the least important of the three men in the picture. It is the parable of the two sons: not of the two brothers, for that would not directly imply the father; and it is in the relations of these three, and in the unexplained relations of these three, that we are to find our truth to-night.

That being so, I want us to see three

things in order that we may get to the heart of Christ's parable. The first is a very obvious fact—the parable is not complete: there are omissions, and the omissions are made of express purpose by the Artist that we may be provoked to ask questions. How came it, for example, that this prodigal ever thought of returning home? It is the last possible thing that could occur to him. He knows that he has done everything to close the doors of his father's house. He knows that the last place to turn to, judging by all he can tell, is the old home which he has ruined as a home. Then again, supposing that he desired to return, how was it possible in those days, when travelling was difficult, for him to return? How was it that he, without a penny and without strength, found his way over mountain and torrent, through valley and over the sea, to the old home? The parable is not complete. In the next place, the parable is not true—I mean it is not Christ's true, original parable. We shall see what that means as we go on: we shall begin to see as we understand the third point, which now claims our attention.

This parable is the greatest satire in literature. Christ did not often speak up for Himself. When questioned, He did not often spend time in writing the apology for His own life; but in these

three parables of this chapter He gives us His great vindication of Himself, and for once He annihilates His enemies. We read that these parables were occasioned by the presence of the Pharisees and their observation, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.' These men, who were righteous in their own sight, and who, remember, counted Jesus a righteous man if only He would accord with their behests, these men were astounded, and at last disgusted, to find that the Master deliberately sought the society of those whom they termed the refuse of the land; and they asked Him why it was that He did this, and summoned Him to give His credentials, His authority, His reasons for a course so outrageous to all the religious thought and sentiment of a day when it was held to be incumbent upon the 'righteous' to avoid all contact with the unclean. The people were divided, they held, into those who were religious, and those for whom religion had no message, no meaning, and no hope. Why, then, did He deliberately cross the gulf between them and try to drag the unclean into the respectable society of the religious?

Jesus, in two parables, explains why. Why does the shepherd seek his sheep, and why does the woman seek her coin? And then He turns upon His questioners. In the after days, when

His back was against the wall and only a few hours left Him, He spoke out of the depths of a burning heart and pronounced His final woes upon them; but that was nothing compared to this. He said, 'I will show you yourselves,' and then He did what an artist sometimes does—He took a great picture and He altered it. In that picture there were three figures, and He took His brush and washed one over, and then painted in another figure, and He said, 'You have questioned Me; you have ventured to say I am wrong; and you have said, with all the emphasis you can, that you are right. Then I will paint you in here that all men may see you.' And He painted the Pharisee in between the father of the prodigal and the younger brother. The Pharisee is for ever placarded on the walls of the world's thought, placarded for scorn and for judgement. We have always seen that, of all despicable figures, his is the most despicable. We know that the hand that could paint that picture was guided by a heart full of the flaming indignation of God, but we do not see how flaming was that indignation—we do not see that the satire was the satire of the God who sometimes laughs—we do not see that, until we observe that the picture has been altered, and that the Master has taken out His own figure and placed the Pharisee in His own place. The Pharisee questioned His right to be

there ; he demanded to know His reasons, and asserted He was wrong and had no place : ' We have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and you have no right to open the kingdom of heaven to these outsiders,' said they. ' Very well,' said the Master, ' then I will show you what you look like. I tell you they are the lost children of your Father in heaven, and you have the keys of the kingdom, and it is yours to lead them to the Father. I will show you what you look like in the sight of God, of men, and of devils.' And we have looked for all these ages, and the verdict of our hearts has always been that, bad as the prodigal may have been, the elder brother, who would have kept him among the harlots, was doubly so.

And now we have arrived at the true and original parable of Jesus Christ. The parable as here written is a palimpsest. Sometimes in Egypt a traveller discovers in some old monastery a roll which he picks up and reads, and finds it apparently worthless ; but being wise he takes it home, and, treating it with chemicals, to his unspeakable joy discovers that it is a palimpsest. It is a roll on which two books have been written, one above the other—parchment being so scarce at times that they used to write what they had to write upon parchment already used ; and when

he has strengthened the faint traces of the text beneath he may find—it may happen to-morrow—the earliest known copy of the Greek Testament, a priceless treasure. This parable is a palimpsest, written over by the Master's own hand, and underneath is the story of the Christ, written in blood. Let me tell it to you. Remember, I tell the parable, and not the history. The parable conveys and holds the truth in picture form.

A certain man had two sons. The younger of them, warm-hearted, eager, restless, wayward, felt the restraints of home, felt the calling of the great outer world ; and at last, so often did he make request, so little did the warnings dissuade him, the father, with many an added warning, let him go. He took him to the next town, started him fairly upon his journey, and then returned. The neighbours noticed that he had grown older in that journey, and they began to notice that the home seemed changed after that. Even they missed the riotous laughter, even they missed the song, even they missed the good-fellowship of the lad who had gone. Inside the home, as the letters came for a little while month by month, brightness shone ; but at last, when no letters came, the elder brother who was left noticed that the father went about with a stricken heart, and that gloom

and sorrow settled more heavily in those eyes. The elder son himself missed the playmate of his boyhood, missed the brother he loved, and he knew the father missed him more. The blinds were often drawn down, and there was never any song; there was no place, no heart, for merriment; and the son knew that disgrace was haunting the father's heart and had smitten the home.

One day, when long months had passed, he said to his father, 'Father, we have never spoken about it, but we understand: he will not come back again. He thinks that he has shut thy heart, and shut the door of home. He has gone, I fear, to evil place. He has gone where he would not own himself by name. He will not come back unless, father, unless I go to fetch him; I will go to-morrow, and I will not come back without him.' 'No,' cried the father, 'thou shalt not go; I cannot live without thee. He has gone, and I cannot lose thee too; and yet—I cannot, no, I cannot live until he come back. Go, go; cost what it may, go, and come not back without my lad. Go.'

And he went. He tracked his brother from town to town, followed him for many a weary day, and he always followed downwards. From bad to worse, from worse to worst, until it was difficult to trace him; and then he found him in

the depths, alone in the mire, starving, half-naked, and unknown. He stooped and whispered his message in his ear. He stooped again and told the story he had come to tell, the story he had brought through darkness and cold and danger, and almost death. At last the lad looked up. 'No,' he said, 'it is not for me; no, I cannot go back; I cannot face the old man; leave me to die, I cannot go back.' And again he told the story he had come to tell, and it was the elder brother's strong arm that lifted the lad, it was the elder brother's coat that covered him, it was the elder brother's faith that led him over moor and torrent, and it was the elder brother who would not let him go. And so it was thus that the prodigal ever came to think of going back: it was the faith of another and the love and trust of another that bore him, with many a protest, bore him onward and onward, over hill and dale, and land and sea, until they came near to the countryside where they had played as boys—until they came at last to the turn of the road where the old home would be seen.

That old home, since the elder son had gone, had been dark; the old man had often gone to the brow of the hill and shaded his eyes against the light, and looked down the long white ribbon of road, but even that had been given up, and now the old man scarce ever left his house. But this

day it chanced that he was looking once again, and when he saw them his heart bounded out of the long and deep despair, and he ran—yes, the old man ran, and the elder brother turned aside, for not even he could come between in that hour when the prodigal was clasped to the father's heart for ever.

This is the parable of the Father, the Prodigal and the true Elder Brother, whom we call Jesus Christ.

When you have climbed some mountain to the top, you must tarry for a while, for you can see from thence what you cannot see anywhere else, and the land from here lies clear and new before you: you see here the regnant and dominant truths of life.

You see, as you look at these two parables side by side, man's great mistake: you see how he thinks wrongly about God. The worst thing that lad ever did was to think, as men have often thought, that he might creep in among the hired servants. Man has thought that God could cease to be a Father, and therefore he could cease to be as a son in God's sight. We have not realized that our state, our present and our future, depend upon the unchangeable heart that never gives in and never gives up. What man has said God is, and what God is, are sometimes poles asunder.

Then, again, you see what sin is. You have seen this before, but here you see it in its awful simplicity, Sin wrecks the home of God. Sin steals the Father's joy and hushes down the songs of heaven. There is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth : there is speechless sorrow, and age-long silence, and grief that cannot be expressed, in heaven, in the home of God, over the prodigals who do not know they have a Father. Let this picture live for ever in the room in which you dwell the most. Sin does this. We have too often talked, we have too often preached, only of what sin does to the prodigal : we know that. But the largest effect of sin is there, in the Unseen, in the silence of the everlasting Cross and the heart of the Father. The preachers have warned you, and never warned you too often, against what sin will do to you. Be it mine to tell you again and again, to bid you remember that sin wrecks the Father's happiness, and crucifies God.

Therefore there is revealed to us here a still greater sin. Christ teaches us that it is not necessary to be a prodigal. We need not leave the home, and many of you have never left it ; but the nearer you are to the light the more deeply is it possible to sin : you may live in the Father's home cold as an icicle, correct as a Pharisee, never transgressing a commandment of

His. You may live for what you can get; you may live there afraid to disobey; you may live there in the common round of faithful duty, and yet do it all with the heart of a slave. It is pardonable to forget, when you are in the far country, that God is a Father; it is not pardonable when you live at home. And what the Father wants is not the correctness of this man, who can say he never transgressed a commandment: we may be sure he never went one inch beyond the commandment. What He wants is the obedience, not of a slave, but the loving service of a son who will go beyond the first mile, and never count the second nor the third; whose heart of love, gratitude, affection, and devotion brings to the Father's lips that cup that does something to slake the agony of the thirst after the prodigals who have not returned.

It is yours, if you have wandered, to return. It will be yours—listen!—yours to lift one burden from the heart of God. As long as you remain in sin, you are to God the Father agony unspeakable. By returning you may heal His wounds and stay the bloodshed. I do not ask you to return for your own sake: I have a greater reason. I implore you to return for God's sake. And if you have not wandered—God be praised! —all the more is it needful, and all the more reason have you, to live in that home sons and

daughters of the Father of all love ; and it is then yours to enter into the service of Jesus Christ, to spend your life as the Eldest Brother has spent His life, not only for the sake of those whom you can bless, but even more because, by blessing, healing, relieving, rescuing those, you are healing the Father's heart. You are to live in this only religion : that your God is your Father, and the end of your being is to satisfy Him. It is that to which you are called.

And see, the great parable of these prodigals is not yet complete. The Eldest Brother is out over the mountains to-night, through all the travelling ways of history, and amid all suffering and loss and death ; He is out, seeking everywhere, and the prodigals are coming home and the homed ones are learning the life of sonship. At last the banquet-hall shall be filled. At last every blind shall be raised, and in the full sunlight of life the anthems shall rise. They shall have come back ; the Father will be satisfied, and the Eldest Brother will be there.

X

SALVATION

One thing is needful.—LUKE x. 42.
One thing thou lackest yet.—LUKE xviii. 22.

THE first was said to Martha, the second to the rich young ruler; and we have to ask what is the 'one thing' of which there is need, need in Martha's busy life and busier heart, need in the life of the man whose wealth was countless and whose character immaculate.

Both pictures are exquisite; most exquisite the first, the picture of the quiet home into which Jesus was received by that wondrous hostess Martha. Strange the scene when she lets her tongue loose, in the presence of her guest, in reproaches of her sister. And wherein does Christ's judgement lie concerning her and her sister? Now let me say this: that never does minister preach about these two sisters but some one in his congregations, estimable above most people, comes to him and tells him that she prefers Martha. It has always seemed strange to me that that should happen. One would have

thought that some reverence would have restrained the verdict, if not a sense of humour. When Christ has given His judgement, if we are unfortunate enough to differ from Him, it were well to be silent. And here, what is the judgement of Christ concerning these two women? To get beneath the surface, what is the truth of the matter?

We must rid ourselves, of course, of the superficial idea that, while Martha was busying herself about many things for the comfort and delight of her guest, Mary was simply sitting idly at His feet and listening to His words. If that were the mere truth of the matter, Christ's judgement would have been different; but, deliberately and with emphasis, He says here that Mary was right; and she is the woman of whom afterwards He said, rebuking His twelve apostles, that they were wrong, utterly wrong, and she utterly right, so utterly right, when she broke the cruse of costly spikenard over His feet, that her deed should be part of the gospel for ever, wherever preached. Twice does the Christ set His seal upon her life. There is no one in the Gospels equal to Mary; there is no one who so fulfils her part as she; and yet how serene, how calm, how quiet is the woman! We are apt to admire those whose hands are full, whose minds are ever sending forth new schemes and plans,

who are ever, ever driven, and yet are ever pursuing, ceaseless in their toil and ceaseless in their loyalty ; and yet Martha needed something in the midst of her busy life. Without it her days would become weariness and her service miss the mark.

So we will pause for a moment, and say this : It were a pity for you and me to be so occupied with the affairs of life as never to see life itself ; it were a pity to be so taken up with our duty that we should never get a clear vision of what life really is. And then we will add that there are multitudes around us so helplessly driven that they will never know what life is and what life is meant for, unless you and I master the secret and give it to them. I do not care how busy Martha is if only she will, amid her busy-ness, learn and keep life's secret. Otherwise she will but wear herself out, nerve, heart, and brain, finding when she has done it that the thing she was meant to be has not come to pass. Many a church worker, to take that example, is missing the mark because he thinks the things *he* is doing are the supreme concerns of the kingdom of God. They may be, but then they may not ; and if you are serving the Christ, take time to find out what Christ wants supremely, and then dedicate yourself to that.

Now let us see the position in this first picture. We are wrong when we interpret the picture to mean primarily that Mary is receiving something from the Master while Martha is doing something for Him. We only see rightly when we understand that Mary is doing more than Martha, and when we understand that Mary is giving Christ that which He wants more than Martha is. The picture, then, interprets life with this strange interpretation—that Christ is still seeking and always seeking to be entertained. Martha received Him unto her home, we read, and Christ is ever seeking to be received by us. 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,' and when Mary and Martha hear that, each in her own way sets about supplying His need. And you and I then have to ask, as Mary asked and Martha did not, 'What is it that He needs most of all?'

Now, said Jesus, there is only one thing that is necessary; a seven-course dinner is all right, but it is not necessary; and if there are those who have learned that they are called to provide Christ with something other, then it is well that they pursue their way without criticism. Now Martha did Christ dishonour when she thought she could best entertain Him by looking after, in her magnificent fashion, the needs of the hour and of the flesh. Blessing on her heart for all

she did! But 'twas a pity that she was so distracted in piling up a hospitality that was overstraining her resources and her temper that she made the atmosphere uncomfortable for the Man who was her guest.

And Mary's triumph lay here: that she knew that what Christ desired with great desire, more than all else, was a heart that could understand Him, a heart that would be taught by Him, a heart that would receive the message He had come and was living and would die to tell, a heart that would understand that first of all He was a Teacher come into the world, that He had come to bring the truth of life; that what He hungered for, and the only thing He hungered for on earth, was the disciple who would learn of Him and take His yoke upon him. And she was giving Him that. She gave it, aye, and as no other ever did. When the end came she was the only one who understood that He was going to die. He said so. You do not know, He said, the situation; she knows it, and she has anointed me beforehand for My burial. So superbly did she entertain Him that He felt Himself at home; and He knew through her that He should be understood right through the ages, that her lineage would not fail, that God, and the highest life, and the supremest thought might be understood by the human heart. That was

what she did for Jesus ; and He knew then that the Son of Man had where to lay His head, had where to lay His thoughts, had where to lay the gospel of the grace of life. She had given Him the deepest desire of His heart. ' Come unto Me all ye that labour, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me '—and she came.

I would like to emphasize this, and in order to do so, against inclination, will venture on a personal illustration. Many in this church have done gracious things to me, whereof I am glad ; but they who have been kindest, they who have done the only thing about which I have really cared, are those who have learned of my words. It is they who have given me the only answer which is supreme, the only answer for which my life is lived. Without them, I am a useless piece of the universe ; with them, I have fulfilled my being. ' Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'

Here, then, is the meaning and the chance of your life. Give Christ all that your hands can give ; learn, if you have the genius and the time and the calling, all the tender parts of Martha's kindness ; but keep this secret central and dominant—what Christ wants is not your gifts, but you as His disciple. He wants you so that He may make you His own, give you Himself,

and find in you the need of His own dedicated being. He has set Himself, and God in Him has set Himself, to give life to the world; and the only thing He supremely desires is the heart that will accept His gifts, the mind that will rise into His fellowship and become part of His society. 'I no longer call you slaves, who merely do My bidding; I have called you friends, for My friends know all that I do.' He wants you to give Him your brains, to understand Him, and then to carry His will out to the limits of your power.

Turn to the other picture, and see the same thing. This young man stands higher than Martha in one respect. Martha made the dread mistake of thinking herself right. This young man is quite sure that something is wrong with himself. This young man has succeeded as Martha was not succeeding. She made rather a mess of the dinner, and it was behind time. But this young man had succeeded in what he had tried—'I have observed these things from my youth up.' This young man has taken his task and done it perfectly; and when he had done it, he said, 'Master, I want to know where eternal life is. It is not here, in this.' He knew that, having attained to the height of all that had been set him, and having at his command earth's resources to their fullest, he was still in need,

still in need at the very centre of life. And when Jesus saw him, He loved him. There are only three occasions on which we are expressly told that Jesus loved, and apart from the Apostle John the other two are this young man and the family of Bethany, of whom we have been speaking. Outstanding facts were the love of Jesus for Lazarus and his sisters, and His love for this young ruler.

Now what was the matter with the young man? He had learned this—that virtue is not enough; that to be good does not satisfy; that virtue is not its own reward. He had learned that to be extremely clever in the moral world, and to be a senior wrangler in ethical life, is not enough for man. He was rich, but he was also rich in moral fire, and said he, 'Master, it is not enough, it is not anything, it is not life. What is life, and how can I obtain it?' That was his wisdom, and we must remember that we may be all he was, may occupy ourselves in manifold services as Martha did, and yet be altogether lacking in that which redeems life from weariness and decay.

What did Jesus say? He said to him only one thing, and what He said to him was not this: 'Sell what thou hast and give to the poor.' He said that, but that was not *the* thing He said to him; that was only preliminary. What He said

to him was ' Follow Me.' What this young man needed was one to whom he could devote himself. He needed not to know that he was virtuous. What is my virtue worth if I do not belong to anybody ? What is my character worth if I am not worth something to somebody ? Here he was. ' Yes,' said Christ, ' there you are in your perfectness. What you want is to find yourself taken up, with your strength and your virtue, into some one's service and some one's love. And the gospel has come to you : I want you—I need you.'

Then came the trial. Said Jesus to Martha, ' It is not your busy hands I want, Martha, unless you understand that there are other, supremer needs in my heart.' Said He to the young man—' It is not your wealth I want. Give that to others ; it is in the way. It is you that I want—you, with your golden virtue—you, with your golden courage—you, with your steel of perseverance and endeavour—you, with your bell-like sincerity and truthfulness—you, with your heart of deep humility that knows its own lack and need—you, to be Mine, My friend, My follower, My disciple. Come, let those things go, and follow Me. No, I will not take you with your wealth ; I will not let you think I want you for your wealth's sake ; I will not let you think that you can make your wealth useful to Me.

It is you that I want, and just now it is all that I want.' That is why he was very sorrowful; not because he was a man bound by the love of riches. A man of sordid heart like that would never have been loved by Christ in this way. If Christ had asked him to come over with his wealth and endow His movement with his riches, methinks he would gladly have come; for the perplexity of the man of wealth is this, that he looks upon himself as thereby important, powerful, able to render that which others cannot render, able to be as the gods are, dispensing to those that are in need. And the curse of the rich man is that he may be tempted by his own benevolence out of the kingdom of God; and until he has learned to give himself away, as God has given Himself away—until he has learned to dedicate himself, come what may at any time, to the Christ who needs and wants him, he has not learned to enter into the society of Christ's friends. Until he has dedicated himself to One who calls him upward, and wants his heart and mind and powers more than all else, then his riches may only be a curse, making him think that he is important for that reason. Important, rather, in spite of that reason is he in Christ's sight.

Therefore you are not to let Martha's skill and Martha's hospitable, kindly heart, nor the resources which may be yours, stand between you

and Christ. All these things have their place, if they are ordered and commanded from above. They must be ordered and commanded by the consecrated heart. And the gospel of God is this—the gospel that it is so difficult for the rich man and the busy man to understand—that through all the commonplace duties and opportunities of this life God is really calling us to a higher—now, not only afterwards. He is calling us into His own friendship. We are wanted, we are desired. The glory and the honour of it are too much for our proud hearts to accept. Christ wants us to be His fellows ; He wants us to be His disciples ; He wants us to find room for Him upon earth, in our hearts to build firmly the kingdom of His Father. He wants us to believe that we are made and meant for Him ; precious above all things that we prize and value as our resources ; He wants us to believe that He can make us more than we have ever yet dreamed of being ; that He can take Mary and make her the very shrine of His sacrificial life, and take this young ruler and make him a flaming messenger of the passion of the love of God. He wants you and me.

And lastly, do you know what happened to that young man ? I am going to make a guess. Jesus said, ' Come, and live with Me. I want

you.' That young man, I think—I am not sure, but some one has suggested it, and I accept the suggestion, for it solves problems that otherwise I cannot solve—that young man was Martha's brother Lazarus. He went away. He died. He had missed his chance. Jesus said, 'He would not give himself for Me; I will give Myself for him.' And Jesus walked deliberately out of hiding and safety into the jaws of death to bring Lazarus from the grave. Jesus threw Himself away for the sake of Lazarus. Because of Lazarus they put Him to death. So did Jesus teach that young man life's lesson. 'It is not your wealth I want, it is you'; and Christ said 'I will show you how,' and He gave Himself away. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,' and Lazarus came back, and he was Christ's after that. Christ hath laid down His life—is laying down His life for you now. Will you come back?

XI

LAZARUS

He whom Thou lovest.—JOHN xi. 3.

IF you had not looked at your Bibles, and if I had not announced the chapter and Gospel, should you have known who that was? Who was the man that was known as 'He whom Jesus loves'? At the end of my last sermon I said there had been a suggestion, which I accepted, that the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked Him how to obtain eternal life, and whom Jesus had bidden go, sell his possessions, and follow Him—that that young ruler was Lazarus. This morning I am going to show reasons for thinking that that was so. The suggestion has been made, I do not know by whom, nor have I seen the article he has written, nor do I know his reasons, and so for what I say this morning I am alone responsible. I am going a little off the usual lines; I am going to give rein to my imagination a little, because I am heartily tired of the so-called interpreters of Scripture who leave a thousand expressions and a thousand statements uninterpreted; tired of taking books from my

library shelves and putting them back in the same place without results ; tired of reading the Gospels as if there were no living men and women behind them ; tired of thinking of the Christ as if He were a pattern God merely, and not one who lived as I live, only to the uttermost, who was moved by the circumstances of every day, whose fate and fortune were decided by the men who loved and the men who hated Him. I want us to realize—and it is for this reason that I go to somewhat extreme lengths—that behind the formal statements which are made in the Gospels there lay a thousand circumstances, and there lay, varied and rich and wonderful, lives which were real once and are real now, because they were loved and are for ever loved by the Christ.

I do not, however, wish to insist primarily upon the suggestion that Lazarus was the rich young ruler ; I shall show some reasons for thinking he was, but I am not tied to that. I want to show that he was, at any rate, that kind of man, in that social position, and what is more important, in that position among the Jewish nation ; and I want to try to make some suggestion towards the answer of the greatest enigma of the Gospels—who was Lazarus ? The greatest enigma of the apostolic ministry is the question, who was Titus, and why is he never mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles ?

For there was no more important man in the service of the Apostle Paul. And the enigma of the Gospels is, who was Lazarus? for, apparently, on the evidence of the chief witness, there was no man more important in the crisis of the history of Jesus.

We first of all, then, have to note this: that Lazarus is not mentioned by name in the first three Gospels. Nevertheless, John shows us that Lazarus was the chief factor in the fate of Jesus. Again, Martha and Mary, apart from that one paragraph in Luke, where we see Martha serving and Mary listening to the Master, are never mentioned by name in the first three Gospels. Nevertheless, when John writes his account in this eleventh chapter, he speaks of Mary and Martha as if they are among the best known people in the circle of Christ. Now why, in the early making up of the Gospels, are these three never mentioned by name? The paragraph of Luke that I have referred to belongs to the part of his Gospel which he himself has saved for us, and it does not belong to the records of His life most commonly known in the early days. Why are these people never mentioned by name, it being certain that there were none nearer to Him, none for whom He did more, and none who did more for Him?

Problems of this sort can only be gauged and can only be approximately answered from the point of view of a wide knowledge not only of the Gospels, but of how the Gospels came to be. Now the first three Gospels consist briefly of two parts. They were not written, like John's Gospel, by men who sat down to write books straight away. The three Gospels are compiled out of records that were present when the evangelists sat down to compile their work. One part is the great record of Christ's teaching which is due, according to all evidence, to the Apostle Matthew, and that is why the first Gospel is called his, because it most largely contains that record; but the other part, with which we have now to do, consisted of the records of His ministry, of His works, and these records are really the records of the apostolic preaching. Of that I am convinced. It was the business of the apostles and the early preachers to tell their audiences about Jesus, and so it came to pass that perhaps under the guidance of Peter, and chiefly from him, there grew up selected records of the most significant parts of His ministry, and it is these records that you have saved for you not only in the first two, but also in the third Gospel.

We see, then, the first reason why these three people are not mentioned by name. In the public preaching about Jesus and His life, it was not

necessary to mention the names of His most private friends. Neither was it always safe, as we shall see. It did not matter what the name of the young ruler was; and you will remember that though Matthew and Mark tell you of Mary's supreme act when she anointed His feet six days before His death with her precious ointment, her name is not given—and this is all the more amazing since Jesus said that her deed should be told wherever His gospel was preached! You would never have known that woman's name had it not been for John. It is of no use to ask me, Why does not the evangelist give the young ruler's name? I ask you, Why does he not give Mary's name? There is no doubt as to who that woman was, because John has given us her name, and it is quite certain that the young ruler had a name, and he must have been some one near to Christ, as we shall see. So it came to pass that in the ministry of Jesus there were many minute details which were not necessary for the popular audiences, and it is years afterwards—also years after the earlier records had taken literary form—when John, with the fullest knowledge of them all, writes his own Gospel, deliberately here and there correcting the earlier evangelists, and clearly showing a knowledge of the details of the inner circumstances of events that the others had not,—it is then that we hear of facts, and men and women

whom it was quite safe and whom it was quite useful to mention half a century after there had passed away all danger from the mention of their connexion with the Crucified.

But there is a further reason, I suggest to you, why these names are suppressed, and my further reason is that the records of the first three Gospels have almost exclusively to do with the ministry in Galilee; so much so that you might never know, were it not for John, that Jesus ever came to Jerusalem during His ministry before He died. And, of course, the events we are studying fell within the circle of the influence of Jerusalem.

Turning to the eleventh chapter of John we read in verse 19 that 'many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.' Now, in the Fourth Gospel the expression 'the Jews' is used, strangely but very properly, for the party who were most bitterly hostile to Jesus, and this shows that Mary and Martha and Lazarus belonged to that circle that was officially opposed to Jesus, and, that when Jesus went to Bethany, He was passing into the circle of His enemies; that is why He stays outside the village, and that is why Martha whispers to Mary secretly that the Master has come; that is why the information that Jesus has arrived is kept from them. We read that when Mary went to meet Him, they thought, as they followed her, that she

was going to the tomb to weep. There are many other indications; but we now have clearly this point of exceeding interest and illumination, that Lazarus, the subject of our study, was one of the ruling party, which party was hostile to Jesus. Lazarus, then, was one of those few rulers who gave over their allegiance to the Master. He stands far more prominently than Nicodemus, and far more prominently even than Joseph of Arimathaea, as one of those rulers who kept so pure their hearts among their own sect, that they went against the stream, and bowed in their love and faith before the Nazarene. Lazarus, then, becomes of exceeding interest to us; but it was not well, after the catastrophe had fallen, when the bitter hate of the rulers was lashing the little Christian Church, it was not fitting, it was not safe, at least it was not discreet, that his name should be too often mentioned or should too soon be put on record.

We have, then, got to this: that there was this family of the upper classes attached by love and allegiance to Jesus, among the ruling sect of the Jewish people, friends themselves of those who were His enemies; and then the interest, as we follow the story out, grows in fear, and danger, and at last, tragedy.

Turn for a moment to the young ruler. I want

us to link him with Christ a little more closely than we sometimes do. We are expressly told of no other man, except Lazarus and John, that Jesus loved him. He loved many, but only of these three, so far as I remember, are we actually told this. And when you see the young ruler going away exceeding sorrowful, what, think you, was his fate? Do you think Jesus will let him be? Do you think the love of Jesus, when it had reached such a height that it became remarked and remarkable, was so poor a thing that it would let that incident close his career? And does not Jesus say, in His own way, 'I am not going to let that young man go; it is impossible in men's eyes, but it is not impossible in God's; rich though he be, he shall love Me and serve Me more, in spite of his riches, and into My sovereignty he shall yet enter'? That is Christ's way of expressing His determination. And so I find that He entered into the home of Mary and of Martha, and I find there the point of attachment between Him and Lazarus.

Now the curious thing is that we do not know certainly where Mary and Martha lived. We all of us, I know, have the idea that Mary and Martha lived at Bethany. Now read the first verse of this eleventh chapter, remembering that this is the first time Lazarus is mentioned by name in Scripture; and you notice how, in the

second verse, John links him on with the sisters who were so well known: 'Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.'[1] That seems in English to say that Bethany is the village of Mary and Martha. John may mean that, but he may not. In the Greek, the two prepositions translated 'of' are different, and the meaning may be (and I cannot for the life of me see why he uses them so, unless he means this)—the meaning may be that Lazarus lived at Bethany and was known to be 'Lazarus of Bethany,' just as we speak of 'Dale of Birmingham,' but that he came originally from the village of Mary and Martha. Luke speaks of the village of Mary and Martha, but does not give the name. That, I think, is the meaning. I do not quite see the use of John's rather peculiar expression unless it means that Lazarus of Bethany (known as such because of his possessions there—probably he owned most of the place) belonged by birth and extraction to the village, in Judaea, of Martha and Mary. So you must not necessarily imagine this young ruler living with his sisters. They probably lived apart, and it was his illness that brought them to his side on this particular occasion. Thus you have the picture of a man known so well because of his connexion with that place, probably pos-

[1] R.V. The A.V. is simply inaccurate.

sessing the greater part of it ; the name is linked to him, for we read afterwards that Jesus ' came to Bethany where Lazarus was,' and you find him there in a position of some influence and authority among the upper circles of the Jewish people ; you find him drawn by more constraints than one within the fascination of the love of the Preacher of Galilee ; these two men found their hearts cleaving one to another as the heart of Jonathan clave to the heart of David.

Looking back to these chapters of the Fourth Gospel, we find, as we have found often before, that Jesus for months past has been in danger of His life. He has escaped, when escape seemed impossible, from the assassin's dagger, and He is now hiding away in some quiet place far removed from Judaea, having once more escaped. Then one day a message is brought to Him, and I think that it is a secret message. The name is not given—' He whom Thou lovest is sick.' Now I can only interpret the following narrative in this way : I can only interpret it by the supposition that that was not the only message Jesus received, that another message followed with further information. You have, then, this position : these two women—distracted by the critical illness of their brother, loving him in their womanly way, putting their brother's welfare, as they had

a right to, before all other considerations, and yet taking the precaution of sending it in secret manner — send the request that their Master will come, though in very peril of His life, back within the circle of His foes, to help their stricken loved one. Lazarus knew what they were doing, or heard what they had done, and not only being more acquainted than they with the immediate plots and stratagems of his own circle, but also more alive to the danger, he sent a message bidding the Master beware, bidding Him not come near, except with the greatest precautions ; and so we read that Jesus stayed where He was for two days.

The Jews, of course, would know that the sisters' message was sent. We read again and again of their taking counsel, weaving their plots and stratagems, and they were not the men—priests many of them—to let a message slip between their fingers without their knowing. So by spending two days where He was, Jesus would throw them off the scent, and it was the message of love, bidding Him not risk His life, sending Him word that he could do well for a few days, that his life was not in such immediate danger—it was that message that sent to the heart of Christ a thrill when He said, ' This sickness is for the glory of God.' Now that expression of Jesus has only one meaning. He uses it again and again, and it always means that there

is going to be the revelation of a sacrifice. The glory of God, in Christ's mind, is always the glory of sacrifice, the glory of him who surrenders himself, the glory that was revealed fully on the Cross. It means that here Lazarus is going to die rather than that Jesus should imperil Himself. Jesus was willing to die to save Lazarus. So when the third message comes He tells His disciples that Lazarus is dead, and unexpectedly. I cannot interpret this passage, nor can I interpret Jesus of Nazareth, except by believing that Jesus thought he would not die—He said so—and was shocked and surprised when He heard that he was gone.

There is now, as He starts for Bethany, a strange air of mystery and aloofness. Mark tells us how the disciples stood apart as He wrapped His cloak around Him, and went on His way. He speaks as it were in words of dream—'If a man walk in the day he is safe; he knows where he is going; it is best to go right on. You tell me I am going into the jaws of death; well, I am going right on.' He sets out for the dread district where His foes lurk, the apostles hanging back behind Him, till Thomas pulls them together. He sets forward; and as you follow Him to the grave, as you follow Him when He meets Martha and Mary, you still find Him wrapped away in a great aloofness of thought and determination. He is going

to the rescue of a friend He has loved—back into the circle of danger. He is going with this deep conviction in His heart, that He will prove now and for ever that the man whose life is bound to His by the bonds of devotion, of love and of sacrifice, is immortal. 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on Me, he that is devoted to Me, shall never die. Die! It is an insult to My friendship.' And when He stands by the grave, we read, in strange, almost untranslatable words, that indignation surged through His heart, and that He 'troubled' Himself. I do not see what that means except that He taxed Himself there and then that this had ever happened, taxed Himself for not coming immediately, for the delay of those two days. When He saw the grief of Mary and the grief of her friends, when He thought of love and friendship and life insulted by death, He was indignant with a strange indignation, His heart surged within Him, and he wept. He stood there, danger-girt, in spite of every precaution He had taken; stood there with the two sisters weeping at His feet, and His friend lying dead and cold within; stood there once more where men have stood beaten and insulted by death; there where men have stood, slandered by all appearances, made to seem but the children of an hour and the children of the dust; stood there in our name and the name of mortal

love, amid foes who had come to lay Him beside His friend : ' Lazarus, come forth ! '

It is not an incident of a day ; it is the inner meaning of things and of the movement of this world. Almost against his will the heart of Lazarus had been bound to the Master, and the Master was not the man to deny those bonds, and here He asserted that the bonds and unions of love and of sacrifice are unbreakable and immortal. For them He would die, in their defence He would take His life in His hands, and, facing the foes who hated Him, prove His love and the deep meaning of the love of the man who had loved Him.

And so it came to pass that Lazarus was His. He had won him, and now Lazarus sold his possessions ; now Lazarus dedicated himself to the service of the Master. So much so that we read that the enemies of the Christ held another council ; so much so that we read afterwards, in the twelfth chapter, at verse 10, that they determined to put Lazarus to death, ' because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.' You must distinguish these Jews from the men of the ninth verse, the common people of the Jews, who only came to see Lazarus out of curiosity. It means that because of Lazarus, and through his agency, many of his own circle, many of the

aristocrats, many of those who had been the enemies of the Christ, were brought over to Christ's side ; and it was this desperate revolution, this insurrection in their very ranks, brought about through this young ruler, that led the priests, alarmed to the uttermost, to their last desperate determination that Jesus must die.

So in the very midst of it all—courage this!—Jesus once more came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, where he was now probably a poor man, so poor that when they wanted to make Jesus a feast, which they did in His honour, right in the midst of His foes—for as soon as Jesus was in the midst of the people He was safe ; it was only by some wayside that His foes could assassinate Him—they could not do it in the house of Lazarus; and so it took place in the house of Simon the leper—another brave man—and Martha stood and served, but Lazarus, they tell us, sat with Him at meat; and there they honoured the Christ, and with Him the man who, because he had loved, had passed through the perils of death for his friend.

And now you know the meaning of that unexplained question of Judas. (The note which is added is one of those notes added to the Fourth Gospel by some editorial hand; it could

not possibly have come from the apostle's hand[1]). Now you know the meaning of that otherwise impossibly impertinent question, when Mary broke her priceless gift over His feet. Said the twelve, through their spokesman Judas, ' Why was not *this* sold and given to the poor, as well as the other possessions of Lazarus ? Why was *this* kept back, and why was not *this* given to the poor ? ' I say there is no other meaning ; that question is impossibly impertinent had it not been understood that in obedience to the word of Christ Lazarus had parted with all his possessions. Otherwise not even from Judas, who probably himself was a correctly behaved gentleman, was it possible that such rudeness could come. It was understood that Lazarus had parted with all his possessions, and then this princely and priceless gift was given. ' No,' said Jesus ; ' she has done right. The poor ye have always with you, and we have made provision for them, but Me ye have not always ; and she knows it. she knows that because of what I have done for her and her brother I shall die at the hands of those who hate Me. She knows, and you will know soon, that I have given My life for him, and that I cannot escape the hate, even if he escapes it, which encircles us. She has

[1] *The Interpreter*, October, 1910, p. 90.

chosen so to acknowledge and so to crown that which she has seen ; she has seen My true self, My sacrificial heart ; she has chosen the good part once more, and it shall never be taken from her.'

Let that picture of the love of Christ for another man, and the love of Jesus for this woman, bring you within that same sacred circle. Be not you content to live merely as one of the world that God so loved. Do you be lifted by the fascination of the love of Christ into this high and heroic society of friends. He would have you leave all lower and smaller ambitions, and give yourself over to Him ; do you go and ask this question—what must it have been for Lazarus to be loved supremely by Jesus, and what may it be for me ?

XII

THE GLORY OF GOD

When therefore he [Judas] was gone out, Jesus saith : 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him ; and God shall glorify Him in Himself, and straightway shall He glorify Him.' —JOHN xiii. 31, 32.

JUDAS leaves the upper room, and when the sinister form has disappeared into the night on the fatal errand, Jesus, with measureless sigh of relief, declares that now, at last, the glory of God is a fact realized on earth, yea, in that very room.

Inexplicable this, to all appearance. So inexplicable, that commentators almost confess that they are unable to trace any connexion between the expulsion of Judas and the glory of God. So impossible has it seemed to find any such connexion that one scholar (F. Spitta) has proposed to make here the needed re-arrangement of these disordered chapters.[1]

And indeed, when I look at the scene myself, when I see Judas slinking through that door, I say, 'There goes the failure of God.' Jesus says, 'Now is the glory of God at last established

[1] For this I must refer to my *Disarrangements in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press).

here, and in it the glory of the Son of Man ; yea, here is certain presage of the fulfilment of God's glory in all its splendour.'

It is into this chamber of truth, dark with excess of light, that we have to look. Not until we are inside and have grown accustomed to its unearthly light, shall we see. Seeing then, we may never forget.

What is the glory of God ? We are here, it is said, to glorify God. Strange is it above many things, therefore, that few of us pause to ask what that glory may be. Among the few things stranger still are the ideas of His glory that have run riot in the religions of men. Men have been, so we are told, damned for His glory ; angels and men are, for His glory, chained everlastingly to the monotony of vocal praise ; for His glory Agag has been hewed in pieces, and Ridley has gone to the stake ; for His glory ' saints ' in India measure the miles by unintermittently measuring their lengths in the dust, and in England mothers dedicate their children to the high task of delivering such saints from their accursed holiness.

It is not, then, quite obvious what we mean when we speak of the glory of God. And to go back to a simpler question, what is the meaning of ' glory ' ?

It is of no use to consult dictionaries, English,

German, or Greek, on this question. A word so 'simple' is not explained there. We are supposed to understand it. England, Germany, and Greece have had a fair share of the earth's glory, but do we really know what it is? On the West Coast of Africa, glory means a few glass beads made in Birmingham; in Birmingham it means to be political dictator. Glory in Cambridge means to stroke the 'Varsity boat, to be Senior Classic, or President of the Union. Among women glory means a new hat—it also means to be 'the mother of the Gracchi.' And to get nearer still, to seek the meaning of this word in one example. What is the glory of the Premiership? Is it to lord it over men, or to be the first servant of the Commonwealth? What is in a name? Everything that the heart of man puts there.

What do our hearts put into this word glory? What glory are we out after? And, to return to our first question, what glory is God seeking with all the measureless insistence of His Eternal Spirit?

Can we but see it with cleansed eye, it is here for us to behold in this upper room, as Judas leaves the circle of the friends of Christ. Said Jesus: 'It is here now.'

But to see Cathedral windows we must be inside the Cathedral. [That is why all criticism of religion from outside is moonshine.] And to get

within the upper room, to get into the atmosphere and situation, will mean a journey.

For months Jesus had been in peril of His life. Time and again He had only just escaped. Again and again the great swordsman had kept His foes at rapier distance. In all He is truly Master.

One of His problems was how to gain and keep possession of a quiet room, where He might, at His own time, do the work of Eternity, and write Himself for ever on the hearts of His own (John xiii.-xvii.). Jerusalem would be crowded with pilgrims, and rooms would be letting at fabulous prices. But among His unnamed disciples was one who could be relied on for all in his power, and for utter discretion. Said he to the Master: 'My upper room is Thine that night.' So much was easy. But how keep possession of that room undisturbed? What an excellent place for the event if only Judas can tell the priests! So it came to pass that the goodman of the house told no one who his guests were to be. So also it came to pass that the apostles did not know where the room was, and that Judas, keenly listening, learned nothing as the Master gave His directions to the two most trusted apostles (Luke xxii. 7-13)—the directions were in cipher—Peter and John themselves did not know whither they were going. But when they turned into the city,

a man who had apparently been idly sitting by the fountain, slowly lifted his pitcher of water on to his head, and walked away without any sign—for were there not sharp eyes around? Following him, street by street, Peter and John are at last called by a low voice into the dark of a doorway, and find themselves facing their guide, who leads them up to the room. In due time Jesus and the other ten arrive. *Judas is in the room, and no one outside knows where they are.* The priests are left kicking their heels against the slowly moving hours. A master swordsman is the man they hate. When they reach the room, it will be too late. When they find Him, He will be ready.

We are now within the room, and must grow accustomed to its light. Jesus has to gather His friends around Him, in utter intimacy and eternal love—and Judas is in the room. The feet-washing—can you imagine it? His hands touch the traitor's feet, and Judas knows that He knows. Can you imagine it—that touch? that heart-surging? the baring of heart of love, and the answering glint of cold steel in Iscariot's eyes. It was Christ's effort to win Judas—His last.

It only remains to compel him to come over, if, peradventure, that may be. To this end Jesus tells His secret—that He knows that one of *them* will betray Him. So incredible is it, that each one can only think of himself—'Is it I?' But

when Jesus raised His eyes to look at Judas, He knew that He had failed.

To understand what follows we must bear in mind that there were two swords in the room, which Jesus afterwards bade them take when they went to Gethsemane ; and also that what Jesus said to John (' He it is for whom I shall dip the sop ') was unheard by any one else. No man knew why Judas left (John xiii. 28). Nor did any one know or think that the betrayal would be that night—nay, surely it could never be.

Jesus has failed with Judas. The task is now to be rid of him, so that the circle of friendship may be realized. John tells us that there is a glory of man which is not as the glory of God (xii. 43). You and I would have told the police. Jesus has only to inform Pilate of what is being plotted—and it is not He nor Barabbas who will be crucified on the morrow. Roman jurisdiction is quite impartial. Nay, He need not go so far as Pilate—He has only to say ' *That* is the man,' and Peter's sword will not tarry. Judas will not leave the room alive. *Haec gloria mundi.* And twelve men would have left the room with cowed hearts to bury a comrade in the dark. Jesus would have kept His life—and lost it. You would never have heard of Him—*sic transit gloria mundi.*

The glory of God is now clear. They know not —Judas only knows—that the great swordsman, calm as the midnight air, is standing between the traitor and those who, had they known, would have killed him on the instant. It is under the guard of the Master's fence that Judas passes out —alive—safe. Now is the glory of God here—in Me—the glory of God—Sacrifice.

On our ears falls the Divine Voice, audible once on Hermon : This is My Son, hear ye Him.

It is a culmination—Jesus is sure now that He can realize on earth the glory of God. For months Sacrifice has been calling Him. On Hermon He made the great Renunciation,[1] and came down to share fate and death and shame with men. He had given His life for Zacchaeus.[2] He had given His life for Lazarus. But is He equal to dying for all men, not only for the noble and the good, but for the unlovely and the untrue ? The answer is given when He gets Judas out of the room alive, at the cost of His own life. He for Judas, not Judas for Him, will die. He has given His life for the traitor—Calvary can be met now—He will be equal to it—there God shall glorify Him in Himself, and straightway, tomorrow, shall He glorify Him.

So it came to pass that from that room there

[1] See my *Jesus, Son of God* (Elliot Stock), pp. 30 ff
[2] Ibid., pp. 38 ff.

went forth, not as you and I would have arranged it, twelve men to bury their comrade in the dark and themselves in the everlasting oblivion of the glory of the world, but a doomed Man, who has become our God—*our* God, for even we have been moved by that Spirit, even we are being called by the high calling of that glory which is the beauty of Christ and the passion of the heart of God. The glory of man is Sacrifice, and of God, Calvary.

PART IV

XIII

GETHSEMANE

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.—MATT. xxvi. 39.

IF anything that I have said from this pulpit has seemed strange to any one, it will, I think, be the saying that Jesus did not come into this world to die; that He came to live, and by His living to redeem, to gather Jerusalem, and to build up a holy kingdom of God upon earth. We saw that that was so from some of His own sayings, and this one is the last proof. 'Let this cup pass'—even when He has come thus far. Though twelve months before He had seen that the hopes with which His ministry began were blighted, that though it was still His duty to establish God's kingdom in the hearts of men, it would not be in Jerusalem; though twelve months before He had seen that all the indications pointed to defeat and death at the hands of His foes; though for months he had steadfastly set His face towards Jerusalem, the Jerusalem which He now saw to be fateful and fatal to Him; though for months He had, without swerving, walked that downward

path, yet now, even at the last moment when death confronts Him with but one veil of removal, even now He prays—there were so many possibilities three years before, and peradventure one possibility is left—even now He prays, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass.'

The only teaching concerning the Master that we dare accept is the teaching of His own words and His own life. Here in Gethsemane we see Him, and a little of the meaning of that conflict of soul in the garden we would read, asking why it was that He so shrank from that which is the fate of us all, or what there was in that death of His that is not in ours, that made it to Him that which He would if possible be spared from tasting.

The contrast between this hour in the garden and the hour before in the upper room—the two or three hours that He had spent there in the warmth and the light and the love—is very marked. You notice His wisdom even there, a wisdom you may take for the direction of your own life. He knew that the conflict was near; and when something you dread is coming towards you with sure and certain pace, you let it spoil all your days. The dread of it, the expectation, the anticipation of it unnerves you here and unnerves you there, it frets and fevers all the weeks, perhaps all the months. Not so Jesus. Though

He knew the hour would strike when the floodgates would burst, He knew that for the present the floodgates would hold; and as you listen to Him in that upper room, girt on the outside with a circle of foes (and Judas gone into their midst to tell them where He was), with an hour or two on which He could count, you see Him with those around Him listening to the undefined word that He is going from them; but as you follow His words all the night through, there is no word of sorrow, no cry of pain. Peace and love and joy are the themes on which He speaks. 'I say these things that My joy'—'My joy,' and Gethsemane there!—'that My joy may be yours, and be fulfilled. I speak these things, and bid that My life dwell in you, and My peace'—torn on Calvary to-morrow morning—'My peace I leave with you.' The hours that were His He kept and guarded in sure faith that Gethsemane would not come before its time. For their sake, and for the sake of the terrific hours that would follow, the door of that room was closed, and He did not speak of what would happen afterwards at Calvary and Gethsemane; all the agony in the valley was blotted out from His words, and there was no mention of it—only of the parting and of the after union. Let us learn the Master's strength, and something of the Master's art.

But now He is plunged into Gethsemane. We have to ask this question, and to try some answer: Why did Jesus shrink with unspeakable agony from His death? Why did He pray even in the last hour that He might be saved from it, and that the cup offered Him He might not drink?

There are some explanations we may put aside as unworthy. He was not afraid to die, taking that by itself. True, He was healthful through and through, and a healthful nature shrinks from death. That is true. So do we all. But that does not explain this agony. That does not explain the sweat of blood. That does not explain the anguish of Gethsemane. There is something deeper, altogether more awful than that. There is something that holds Him constrained in its grasp, and yet tortures Him as it holds Him, from which He cannot escape, and yet which is to Him worse than death itself. The beginning of the end is this.

See, then, what was His death? What was there in it so awful to Him? What was there? Remember how He loved, how He loved the world, how He came to redeem it, how He said He was willing to give His life a ransom for men, how He would, like the good shepherd, day by day lay down His life for the sheep. These words under the olive-trees are deepest words of truth. It was no danger, it was no pain, no physical suffering that made

Him shrink. To do His work, to save, to deliver, to pluck from the dominion of Satan and the power of evil, He will do anything, dare anything, bear anything. You must not compare Him even with the martyrs. You cannot compare Him even with the bravest of the brave. He was braver than they all. These things would not, nay, not for a moment would these things deter Him. There is something here of another kind, of another nature altogether, some dread, some burden, some agony here, more anguished far.

What, then, was His death? Why did He live? He was willing to pour out that life in death, spend it year by year and spend it in death, if need be, to save the people, to redeem man; and yet, the next step—it seems to Him He is forced to this—the next step—He can only see one, and it is walled on the right and walled on the left—there is one dread and awful step before Him, and it is that from which He prays to be delivered. His whole soul is one agony to redeem men from sin, the sin He loathes with every fibre of His soul, *and yet the next step of His life is earth's blackest sin, if He goes forward.* If they kill Him, man's sin is consummated, and God says to Him—it is the conviction of His deepest thought—that it is necessary to go right onward. There is no possibility of drawing back.

His prayers fall back from a silent heaven upon His lips, and yet, if He goes forward, if they kill Him, it is earth's blackest crime. It completes man's condemnation. His own life—the ending of it—is man's last damnation. He becomes the Incarnation of man's condemnation for ever. All the sins of the past are little to this. If He goes forward, a crime greater than man has ever yet put his hand to will be recorded in the annals of earth, and the greatest, the deepest, *the blackest sin possible* will have been done.

You see where He stands—His whole soul, His whole life one agony to redeem man from sin, willing to die if that will help man—but His very death at man's hand man's last damnation. 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' To kill the Highest, to murder the Purest, for man to be guilty of that crime—there is no evil higher, no higher possible—and earth's cup of iniquity will be full. And as Christ feels that this—the filling up of earth's iniquity—is to take place in His own life, you see that that cup is too much even for Him to drink. To think that He—pledged every moment of His life to lift man—that He should be the occasion of man's deepest sin and Satan's crowning hour of victory—that, of all history's ironies, is the bitterest. That is inscrutable. That is the cup of agony He is asked to drink. Man, His beloved, for whom He will give Himself

—for man to find in His life his own condemnation, that is too much to contemplate.

But there is also the other side. Forgiveness —God's forgiveness—was Christ's message. 'But God cannot forgive this. I am as the apple of His eye. I am My Father's very life. I am the well-beloved. It will break My Father's heart. God cannot forgive if they murder Me.' He came to proclaim God's pardon, and His own fate seems to wipe that pardon out. God may forgive anything, but not that—not that. He has come with the divine forgiveness in His heart. He has borne much already. He will bear anything but this last and deepest and highest-handed crime, earth's greatest possible sin, for how can that be forgiven? God may forgive all that has been done, but not this. And yet the bitterest ingredient of His cup was this. What it would do to man is bad enough. The filling up of man's guilt is awful enough. But what it will do to the Father! 'Nay, Father, this I cannot bear, to inflict this on Thee; that they should do this to Me whom Thou lovest more than Thine own self; this cup, if it be possible, let it pass from Me—and from Thee.'

Three-fold is the agony. To bear man's blackest sin in His own dying, in the very act of that death to be the crowning crime of man, and to bear in His own self the sin which makes man's

forgiveness seem impossible, if never impossible before, and to be the breaking of the Father's heart—that cup, surely, is too much even for Jesus to drink.

So then, we feel that this satisfies, that here there is that which may make even Him shrink back. We find here a reason altogether and far removed from the little reasons we sometimes give. No paltry fear of death, but this—the taking of the world's crowning sin with all its consequences to man and to God; taking that right into His own life and letting it be acted out there—that is the cup more bitter than gall.

'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' He drinks it. And now you see the gospel of God. Now you see God displayed as nowhere else. All this experience Christ is living out. We have seen how He learned obedience in His boyhood days, and through all the experience of His ministry. We have learned how He got to know, within the limits of mortal life, the Father, and to enter more and more into full sympathy with His Father to whom He was returning. Through the experience of Gethsemane He is going on to learn, and He is learning more of what that sympathy involves. As we see Him drink that cup, and as we see Him die on Calvary, as we see earth's crowning sin, and the Father's broken heart—as

we see all that earth has done to God, we see this : that there is nothing God does not forgive. Forgiveness is the word written across that page of black history. It happened : earth's highest possible sin was done—nothing worse can be done. Yet Pentecost came, and mercy and pardon came, and the Messenger came back through the gates of life and said, ' Peace be unto you.' He showed the marks of His anguish, and there was no indignation or wrath. He came back from the Father's presence : ' Peace be unto you. My peace I leave with you. Go and preach the forgiveness of God to all nations of the earth. Preach it, for earth's worst has been borne, earth's worst has been forgiven. He will not dishonour your words. Preach it to all the nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

You see now how the gospel of forgiveness comes right out of the dying of Christ ; not by any legal agreement such as we have had in some theories of the Atonement ; not by any mere purchase ; but the two, the dying and the forgiveness, are one. Christ's dying is earth's most damnable sin, earth's blackest crime, and at the same time the last proof of the forbearance and the endurance of the eternal God—the last sorrow taken to the heart of the Father, and only the forgiveness of it mentioned upon earth. You

cannot see the Christ without seeing earth's last sin, God's deepest agony, and God's ever-present forbearance and forgiveness.

Christ had to learn obedience, had to learn the Father's will through the things that He suffered. He went into Gethsemane seeing but one step before Him. He awoke on that resurrection morning to find that the worst had happened. He had borne all, and all was for ever pardoned. He arose to resurrection life to live in amazement of the Father's love that never faileth. He awoke to enter at last into the unfettered and boundless joy of the love of that Father so revealed in His great love to man.

XIV

THE VINDICATOR

But when the Comforter is come . . . even the Spirit of Truth . . . He shall bear witness of Me. And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged.—JOHN xv. 26, xvi. 8-11.

THE work of the Holy Spirit is best seen in history, and these words will enable us to look back over nineteen centuries, and to see that the one presence that has worked from end to end of those centuries is He of whom the Master spoke for the first time on the last night of His mortal life.

Very quietly Jesus speaks of the coming of One of whom He had never spoken before in this manner, and we find that His words are the key of all earth's history since.

It is strange that a peasant preacher, standing in a quiet refuge for a few hours, with the blood-hounds on His track, knowing that on the morrow He would be condemned by the law of His own nation and by the Imperial law of the Governors of the world, should speak words which have

outlasted His nation and outlasted the empire ; words that must have seemed ludicrous when spoken ; words that are their own vindication to-day.

You are aware that the name Comforter is an unsatisfactory translation. The Greek word Paraclete has been taken over into modern language. Its exact and full significance is a little difficult to render. A Paraclete is one who stands by you and takes your part ; he is your champion and your advocate. But we have to notice here that the Paraclete in these chapters is not our Advocate, but Christ's Advocate. ' If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.' Christ is our Advocate. He will answer for us in all the worlds and before all accusers. But Jesus too needs an advocate. He, Jesus of Nazareth, is leaving this world in criminal garb with the last sentence of guilt passed upon Him, hung between two common malefactors, outcast, rejected, and scorned ; and as He leaves the stage of the world's history with a record which the judges of earth have besmirched with condemnation, He bows His head, but He says that the verdict shall be reversed. ' I will send My Advocate ; the trial is not finished ; I appeal from Pilate, from Caiaphas, from this people, to history, and My

Father will send my champion, and the world shall be convicted and convinced.'

We may note in passing that from this point of view the work of the Holy Spirit widens beyond our common thought and language. We are accustomed to speak of the Holy Spirit, not as Christ spoke, but in other ways, as if He were something which could be sent down in supplies. The Holy Ghost is here; and the Holy Ghost is not something but some one; and if any being ever made His mark upon the history of man, it is the Holy Ghost. And we are delivered from selfishness once again, when we turn from the consideration of our own needs to the consideration of Christ's need. We want help from the Eternal; so did He. He died in the direst need that any son of man ever knew, leaving not even a name behind that was allowed any shred of honour. He died amid the wreck of everything for which He had worked, and His condemnation was the denial of every word He had ever uttered; the lie, full and absolute, was given Him, with common consent. Is it so to-day? Never again did Jesus plead. Never again did Jesus preach to the people. Never again did He submit Himself to the judgement of men; and yet the world has altered its opinion concerning Him without any controversy, and with a unanimity that is unparalleled. He stands accepted in the

conscience of every man. They do not all call themselves Christians. They do not all follow Him ; they do not enlist under His banner. They do not care about Christianity ; they will not draw near to the Church. Many of them call themselves infidels, but they bow the knee before Jesus of Nazareth, and no man findeth fault with Him. They do not call Him God ; but from end to end of this earth, wherever He is known, no man stands but with bare head in the presence of Jesus. There is nothing more amazing than the difference between the standing of Jesus on that black Friday when He died, and the standing of Jesus to-day in the judgement-halls of human thought. He was then outcast from church, from society, from the only empire that ruled the world. To-day He is peerless among the children of earth.

Who has wrought this amazing work ? Who has taken Jesus of Nazareth from the criminal dock, and placed Him on a throne that is approached by no man ? Who ? Who ? 'I will send my Advocate and my Champion. The verdict shall be reversed. The world shall be convicted of sin, of righteousness, of judgement.' Mark : they are the words of a man powerless, without position, influence, or any prospect but that of death ; dying a miserable death in a little city, in a remote province of the Roman Empire.

He died, and all the words of man are vain compared with these words, which seem to have compelled the centuries. It is exactly what has happened, *and He said it would happen.*

Look into the words, then, a little in detail. 'He shall convict the world of sin, because they believe not on Me.' We may here rightly lay stress on the strict meaning of the Greek word for sin. The Greek word for sin literally means 'missing the mark.' Did they not miss the mark? How they congratulated themselves! How superbly they had wrought their own work, and maintained their name, their place and nation! How supremely successful was Caiaphas! What do you think of Caiaphas to-day? And what do you think of Pilate? *And what do you think of Judas?* Did not he do the best thing with himself when he hanged himself and rid the earth of such an arrant fool? He saw Divinity, and sold it to Caiaphas! What do you think of the Jews? 'He shall convict the world of sin, because they believe not on Me.' A heart that can judge so ludicrously, a heart that can come to the conclusion of Calvary, a heart that can send Jesus to the dock and the cross, is a heart corrupted in all its thought, in all its wisdom, corrupted to the depths of it. To believe not in the supreme righteousness when that righteousness

is lived out in the terms of human life, is the last proof that the heart that so failed to believe is sinful through and through, for only sin-struck materialism can explain the madness of the verdict.

This has been driven right home. There is no question of that. Some one has taken the verdict of Jerusalem, and placarded it for the laughter of the meek. Some one has brought the circle of human thought full round, and we know that Calvary is the one place where the sin of the world is fully seen and judged. Their own verdict is known to be their supreme crime. Who has done that? The Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit of Truth always wins at the last. 'Great is truth and will prevail' is the classic saying, and Truth is not an opinion. Truth is not a creed. Truth is not a system of thought. Truth is not logic. Truth is living. Truth is God thinking. Jesus left the upper room to meet His judges in their madness, knowing that the truth which they buried should rise to be their judge, and that that truth, the very spirit of the Eternal Himself, should never leave the earth, one of the graves of which is for ever sacred unto Him.

In the next place, 'He shall convict the world in respect of righteousness, because I go to the

Father and ye behold Me no more.' What is righteousness? What was it in the days of Caiaphas? What is it to-day? What ideal of righteousness was there among the Jews? Such an ideal that it condemned Jesus! He did not answer to the Jews' ideal of righteousness of that day. The ideal of righteousness in the Roman mind allowed Jesus to be hustled off the stage. The ideal of righteousness in the Greek religions is not moral, and if you search the different schools of men you will find here one and there another ideal of righteousness; but those that are not dead are dying, and the world to-day looks to no mythic tale, looks to no golden age for its pattern of righteousness. With one voice all those who have seen acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is the highest we have ever seen. Condemned to the meanest and foulest death, He is now enthroned in the conscience of man. Who has done that? How came it to pass? He said it would be done, and it has been done. Who was He that could so speak and command the future?

Let us note this glorious fact—that Jesus of Nazareth at last has become the conscience of mankind. There was a book—weak, poor, and yet it ran into its thousand thousand some years ago, because it was an attempt to answer the question every man was asking: What would Jesus do? The run of that book was no proof

at all of any strength in the book, but of the fact that man has become conscious that all judgement in heaven and earth is given unto the Son of Man, and that we are judged and measured to-day and every day not by our chances, not by out opportunities and our ideals, or the habits of our society; but the love that loves us with a deathless love of hunger and passion will not be satisfied except as we conform to Him whom they crucified.

He has, then, become the conscience of mankind. He has withdrawn into the Invisible. He has withdrawn into the changeless realm at the heart of the Eternal, and we know that we are in touch with the fullest life and thought of God when we see, when we think of, Jesus. Who has made Him thus king of man's conscience? The Holy Spirit of Truth, His Advocate.

Lastly, 'He will convict the world in respect of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged.' So spake the accused; so spake the condemned; so spake the candidate for the cross of shame. It was the hour of triumph for the prince of this world. The prince of this world had succeeded in allying the Jewish religion, the finest earth had ever seen, with Roman law and justice, the supremest earth had ever seen, and in using that alliance for the condemnation

of Jesus. No triumph ever seemed so complete. The satanic ingenuity of it is beyond comprehension. But Jesus said, 'My Advocate shall make my words good in the judgement-hall of history and before the gathered nations of mankind,' and the work has been done, and the prince of this world condemned in the heart of man as he never was condemned before. All that makes up the prince of evil—selfishness, greed, malice, hatred of good, lust for evil—is condemned to death without appeal, and he dare not approach the form of the Crucified before whom all men are beginning to bow.

Therefore let us ascribe praise and glory and gratitude, not only unto the Father of our spirits, and the Son who has redeemed us, but also to the Holy Spirit of God who has delivered us from error, from the power of the prince of this world, and made us in heart and conscience, if not in deed, the sworn subjects of Jesus Christ.

May the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit in our lives bring nearer the final day of God's victory! May Christ's Advocate win His triumph unto the uttermost in all our hearts!

PART V

XV

THE NEW ASTRONOMY

Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.—JOHN xx. 17.

I HAVE been asked to explain this difficulty: there is a contradiction between this injunction, 'Touch Me not,' and the injunction in verse 27, when Christ bids Thomas 'Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side.' He forbids Mary to touch Him: He bids Thomas do it. That difficulty, of course, is only on the surface. The command to touch Him and the command not to touch Him are both issued for the same reason: in each case it is Christ's purpose to deliver His disciple from an error, only the error of Mary and the error of Thomas were quite different. The importance does not lie at all in the touch, but in the reason why Mary—as she was doing, and as some versions tell us she was doing—was clinging to His feet: and what that reason was we shall have to discover. Then

we shall come to the greater difficulty which lies in the text itself; for there is a deeper and more subtle contradiction, apparently, in the very words of the text: 'Touch Me not; for I am not *yet* ascended unto the Father.' Surely this is the only time for touching Him; when He has ascended to the Father such touching will be impossible; whereas the words of Jesus imply that the only perfect contact, the only perfect communion, will be when He has ascended to the Father. Difficulties like that will cease to be difficulties as we go on in our study of this altogether interesting picture of Mary Magdalene meeting her Master in the garden in the first early hours of that Easter Day. And of course it is not for the mere solution of them that I have chosen the text, but that we may learn the wisdom of life that in these words is contained, that it may be to us as a Pole Star whereby we may guide our travelling 'till travelling days are done.'

It is always necessary just to state that there is no reason for identifying Mary Magdalene with the woman who was a sinner, and who washed the feet of Jesus, as recorded in the seventh chapter of Luke.[1] We only know two things about Mary Magdalene before we see her in the garden: that she was one of those whom Christ

[1] See Note C, p. 210.

had healed, and that she became one of those women who kept His company as far as possible, and who seem to have ministered unto Him of their substance. And the question which thrusts itself upon us, and has thrust itself upon all students of that first Easter Day, is this: Why did Jesus show Himself to Mary Magdalene before He showed Himself to any other person upon earth after His resurrection? Why does she stand first? and why, before relieving the doubt and amazement which were in Jerusalem among His disciples as they heard from the other women 'He is not in the tomb! He is not in the tomb!' —why, before relieving the anguished heart of His mother, or of those whom He loved at Bethany, or of the disciple who leaned upon His breast—why, before doing that, did He appear to Magdalene?

The answer which is always given is that He went first to her because of the great love wherewith she loved Him, that love's claim is supreme, that He acknowledged it and first went to bind up her broken heart. But that reason will not stand examination. If the claims of love come first, then Mary Magdalene must stand aside. There is His mother; there is Mary of Bethany, and Martha, and Lazarus; there is John. We never hear—no, I will put it more strongly—He never made any special appointment, any special

meeting-place, with His mother, or with Mary of Bethany, or with John ; and the reason for that is this, that if it is a question of love, then love endureth all things—love can wait—love is strong ; and therefore He did not appear first, or specially, to those who loved Him most. Magdalene loved Him, but that was not the reason for going to her aid.

The reason is that her need, not her love, was greatest. There were two people above all others who that day needed Him, and they were the first to whom He appeared. There was Simon of the broken heart and darkened soul, and there was Magdalene. Peter's need is obvious : the resurrection was nothing to him ; in fact it made matters worse. Remorse was never so keen on this earth as when Simon Peter heard that the Master was risen—' risen for everybody except for me—I denied Him—I have no part in the resurrection gladness. If only I had not—— ! ' The bitterness of the might-have-been was never so bitter as in Peter's case. His need was urgent, but Magdalene's was more urgent. It was not greater, but it was more urgent. Not a moment was to be lost : she was going out of her mind.

I said that we know only two things about her before we see her in the garden ; and one thing we know is fully significant. We are told that she was a woman out of whom Jesus had cast

seven demons. That of course is the language of that day; in this day we should say that she was insane, and seven demons made her case a bad one; but Jesus had brought the tangled skein of life to order; by the touch of His cool hand and power He had brought back her life and her splendid powers to peace and health—that is, as we say, to sanity; and her whole collected powers were henceforth devoted, within the channels of a strong, deep, but perhaps narrow nature, to Him to whom she owed her very self. She followed Him; all other ties ceased to exist for her. He had called her back; He had been the Pilot of her soul through the dangerous straits, and had brought her into the full, calm, pacific ocean of life.

Then suddenly the piloted bark had gone to splinters on the rocks. With the disappearance of the Pilot the ship of her soul swung aside and was caught by the mad currents. The centre of her life was again displaced, the equipoise was lost. As you read the story of the garden you see the marks of insanity following one upon another—that is, the marks of a mind reeling from its throne of sovereign reason. She comes to the tomb very early; under the dominance of one idea, she haunts the place. The other women go into the city; she goes, with the strange acuteness that comes at such times, to the one

indispensable place where Peter and John are found. But she returns ; she does not go to the city like the others. She returns ; and when Peter and John leave it she still haunts the place, and the angels, who have a message for every one else, have no message for her. It is not in their power to pierce the veil that is falling between her reason and the truth of reality. They ask her ' Why weepest thou ? ' and her reply is the reply of monomania, expressing the only idea that is in her mind, and in the very words she had used to Peter and John—' They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.' When Jesus Himself stands before her, she does not know Him, not because of His strange appearance, for love is not always blind, and can pierce disguise, but because her mind is utterly absorbed by this one idea : ' Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.' She has not said whom she is speaking of. She thinks, as they always think, that every one knows what is in her mind; there is only one thing possible about which she can think at this hour. ' And I will take Him away,' she says, thinking herself, in her simplicity, all strong enough. Once more the Master, the Sovereign Physician, calls her back ; not a moment too soon has He come, for her mind is reeling to its foundations, and there is only One

who can bring her to herself. 'Mary!' . . . 'Master!'—and she is at His feet clinging passionately.

We have now to notice the way in which Jesus heals her, for it is the way in which He heals us all of our insanity. He calls her to herself; lays His cool, steadying hand upon her—'Mary!' And then, when the full flooding impulse bursts forth, there is that inimitable power of restraint: 'No: you must keep quiet; you must not cling to Me like that. No: you are mistaken, I have not come back to you as I used to be.' Then He raises her out of the maddening maze of things here below, and gives her a sight of the Pole Star by which she shall always live henceforth: 'I ascend unto My Father.' Finally, He gives her that which she so much needs, something to carry her out of herself: 'Mary, this selfish love will not do. Mary, My brethren out yonder do not know that I have risen; go and tell them; go and tell them what you have seen and learned—that a new Pole Star has shone through the mist. I ascend unto My God and their God, unto My Father and their Father.' Re-collection, restraint, revelation and a mission—that is salvation; that is life; that is sanity.

In this earth's history this marks one of those

crises when ancient astronomies die, and new heavens are unveiled. Mary and those whom He calls brethren are a company of men and women who are learning for the first time on earth that which we have been learning ever since. The old Ptolemaic astronomy is dead. 'Mary, cling not to Me here. The centre of life's government is not here, it is yonder, Mary. Life does not revolve round the upper room in Jerusalem, but round the upper room of the Father's fellowship to which I ascend, to which you ascend, to which they ascend.' A day of crisis it was, when men began to re-adjust the astronomy of life, and to learn where the centre of life's universe is. 'Mary, the fellowship that henceforth you have with Me is not to be the narrow fellowship which we have learned in the flesh. It is that fellowship, the same in its essence, but raised to an unfettered power, lifted to a wider sphere, exalted into the everlasting, into the deathless, into eternity.' Therefore she must not cling to the old loved form, but must learn the eternal ways. He taught her, and when He taught her He taught the Church for ever, that fellowship is only possible in the life of the spirit. How many truths are there, sovereign truths, which Tennyson expressed once for ever? They were lying about in his day, and he found them and expressed them finally:

Speak to Him thou, for He hears,
And spirit with spirit can meet.

She thought the old days had come back again. But suppose they had, Mary ; then if thou hadst need of fellowship with the Master, thou must go to the same room, to the same street where He may be. Thou must search for Him through Jerusalem, or through Galilee, and lo, when thou hast found Him, another friend is with Him : He is engaged, and He is weary, and He has spent Himself all day with helping. And fellowship is only intermittent, and there are always the two barriers of the flesh, His and thine, between His thought and thy thought. It is only spirit with spirit that can meet. And, Mary, thou didst think that He had come back to thee as in the olden days. Suppose it had been ; then the years would have gone on in this good but intermittent fellowship, and the day would have come when they would have laid thy flesh in the grave, and thou wouldst have gone to a world that was without a Christ, and that would have been utter loss, Mary. To die would not have been gain.

Love is blind sometimes. Love is blind when it is selfish. Love is unwise when it is confined to the terms of this earth. We learn as we grow older that flowers fall from the apple-tree amid

our regrets, to be brought back to us in the fruit that feeds us. We learn as we grow older, and mankind learns, as the centuries pass and the education of Christ goes on, that full consummation, full enjoyment, full life, can only be when we have passed beyond the limits of the flesh, when we have ascended, not into an unknown and foreign land, but to the Father, when we have arrived at Home.

So from that day began His ascension; you notice He said, 'I ascend,' and the forty days were the upward steps of ascension during which He was accustoming the disciples to feel that He was present when they could not see Him. He said, 'I ascend,' and from that day began the new reign of Christ through which He has been drawing all men unto Himself. Now Christ is the Pole Star of the new heaven and the new earth.

What, then, is it to be saved? In a word, salvation is sanity. Insanity is one of the saddest things upon earth, but it is not so sad in its physical form as you sometimes think. I do not know how near you have been, but in my ministry I have often been very near this sadness, and a word may be of help to some one whose love has been hurt. Insanity is, in its physical form, only imprisonment. You look upon him whom you

love, and you feel that he has ceased to be himself. That is not so. It is only that he is imprisoned behind shattered nerves. All our impressions are due to the flashes that come along our nerves, and if our nerves are not true, are unhealthy, if they are deranged, we get the wrong impressions from the outside world, and the result is that we create for ourselves a world that does not exist. In that world we are absolutely bound to live. You and I only live in the world we create from the impressions that come to us along our nerves. If our nerves are out of order, we are absolutely helpless. Dreams are insanity, in the pleasantest form. You live in an absolutely unreal world from which you cannot, however great the torture, escape till you awake and find the real world from which you have been shut off all the time. And so it only needs the falling away at death of the shattered nervous frame, and your friend steps into truth and liberty once more.

But there are very many people who are insane in this world who are not counted insane. I mean the insanity of life as a whole. Sanity is health—health of mind. Your mind is healthful when it answers to the real world without. Your mind is healthful when it is truly related to all the points of the compass of truth; and the more relations there are, the wiser, the saner, you are.

As you move through the world of life, you are sane just in proportion as your relations with the outer things around you are right, and full, and the communications complete. Here, then, for example, is the man who regulates his life as if the Stock Exchange were the Pole Star around which the universe moves. Some day that man will run up against something that is not in his astronomy, and the stars of his universe will be shattered into tinsel. They only are wise, they only are sane, they only move through the real world, who move by that Pole Star which is the truth. The Pole Star which astronomers look upon is immeasurably distant from this world, but they take all their measurements in relation to that. Christ is the Pole Star of the Eternal. He is not immeasurably distant from the heart that loves Him, but immeasurably near. But the sweep from where we are to the throne of His regnancy is very great, and our journey is very long. Your life is a journey, and you are to guide yourself by keeping in touch with that Pole Star that never moves. And there are these three truths which Magdalene won, and which explain your life : (1) It is a journey onwards to the future which yet shall be ; (2) you can only go aright as you move in the light of Christ's sovereignty ; (3) you have brethren on the journey to whom your life and message and wisdom and love are to

be given, as you travel with them unto the Father's Home.

Finally, Christ says His Father is your Father, His God is your God. That is the fellowship of life eternal into which He called Magdalene, His brethren, and you.

XVI

THE NEW WORLD THAT IS OURS

If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory.

COL. iii. 1-4.

MY purpose in expounding this text is to emphasize as clearly as I can the central truth of personal religion in Christianity ; to hide away in your hearts Paul's innermost thought about the Christian life—a truth which makes all life new ; a truth that is so wonderful that it will take all our attention day by day, all our persistence, if we are not to let it slip out of our minds and leave us in a lower and a poorer world.

Every Easter we rejoice once again in the old but ever new truth that Christ rose from the dead. Paul teaches us to rejoice in the ever new truth that *we have risen from the dead with Him.* Again and again in his writings—and you will remember his writings only cover a few days of his teaching life—in the few writings of his that we have, again

and again and again that is brought out, the central truth of the Christian life. Have we learned it, or have we been postponing our resurrection until they have laid our mortal flesh in the tomb, or, peradventure, until what is called the general resurrection of the Last Day? Each life and its powers shall then be gathered into completion and perfection. But the essential thing is *now*. We have been raised from the dead to life in Christ. In this passage, let us carefully note, Paul is not so much giving advice, as bringing our attention to bear upon the good news, the gospel of life as it is for us in Christ Jesus. When he bids you 'seek,' and when he bids you 'set your mind,' he is bidding you to realize the facts, the truth, the good news, the great gospel. When you have taken that gospel into your life, sincerely, honestly —Paul only writes to you on the supposition that you are honest and honourable people in your thoughts—when you have taken that gospel honestly and sincerely into your life, you have entered into the joy of Christ that passeth understanding.

The first truth is that 'ye died.' Death for you and me is past; we have learned that that which men call death, for us is but the opening of a door into another room of life. The real death, the only death that counts, is for us past.

Here is not only Paul's central thought of personal religion; here you are, if you care about it, at the heart of Methodism. Methodism is simply this: the possession of full and present salvation. It does not know the word 'postponement.' And death for Paul was not a dying to the visible world, but a dying to the old world where sin holds us, where sin governs us, and where sin enslaves us, the old world where we gave our energies to lower and evil things, the old world where we lived a life that was a life of decay and disease, leading to mental and spiritual death. That was the old life in which men lived; that is the old life in which men live to-day. That is the lower world in which they have been enslaved, amid the fogs and mists and miasmas of which they have dwelt.

Jesus came into our world; Jesus came and took His share and fortune. Jesus came and took the buffets and the persecution and the warfare and the temptation. Jesus came, Paul goes so far as to say, in the likeness of sinful flesh; and here on the stricken field He met sin. Here He lived amid all the disadvantages; here He lived in a world that sin had conquered, and the only thing that sin could do to Him was to kill Him. Conquer Him—never; lower by one tone the perfectness of that nobility—never; mar with any real stain the splendour of that character—

never. He asserted Himself, He lived His life here, He worked it out to its fullness here on earth; and on earth the end was revealed for Him and sin, in that death which was sin's defeat. Tear Him limb from limb—sin could do that; but it left the life untouched, undefeated on this earth, asserted in all its purity, its righteousness, its nobility.

Now, said Paul, that is the fact above all other facts for sinners. He became a life-giving Spirit, and the life that there was lived has spread into our hearts, and we, for our part, have our life in Christ. There He was, the beginning of a new world in the old world. Here He is for evermore, the centre and the life of a new world, higher than the old world; and, when you surrender yourself to Him, you are doing no small thing, no transitory thing, no effectless thing. You are dying, as He died, to the old world and entering into a new. See, the day was when the men to whom Paul was speaking lived in the old evil world; their energies, their instincts, their purposes, their works tended in sin's direction and were used for sin's purposes. That was the life they lived; that was the truth about them; but when the Christ came into them their life was turned in the other direction, as our life has been turned in the other direction. To-day, though you and I would not say that we are never vexed by sin, though you

and I could not say that we live every day free from sin, nevertheless, the truth about us is this: if we are Christ's, our life is against sin—the whole bent and tendency of it is against sin, and is for Christ. Now, said Paul, you are not to look upon yourself in isolation; you are to take yourself as part of the great world of Christ. You have risen from one world into another world, and you belong to the higher world that is Christ's. The old life has been buried, and the new life which is Christ's has sprung up in your heart, and it will carry you far.

You are to pause, then, and let that gospel speak itself to your heart. To some of you it will come as a new revelation concerning yourselves. You are to realize yourself in Christ's presence as risen from the dead: you are not to shrink from the awe, from the glory, from the amazement. God is creating a new heaven and a new earth in Christ Jesus, and you are part of that which He is creating. Paul bids us remember every day of our life that God, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, is working as powerfully in you and in me. Ye died to the old world; ye are living in the new world; and your life is hid with Christ and God. 'Hid with Christ in God'? When they pass from our sight through the veil we know that their life is hid with Christ in God;

but it is true of us now. The life around us is visible enough, but our life is not visible. You may take a village, a city, an empire, and the visible life of it you may describe in letters or in history. The life of the animal world you may analyse, you may describe, you may explain ; but no such thing can be done concerning our life, our real life, the life of heart and thought and purpose and aspiration, of prayer and love and longing. That which makes up our real selves is not visible ; here and there it reveals itself in act or word or prayer, but only for a moment, and only dimly and as in a flash. The roots of it, the resources of it, the infinite strength of it, are hid, deeper than the founts of ocean, with Christ in God. The life of Christ has always been hid : some day it shall be manifested. Our life is one with His, in fortune and destiny.

So we come to Paul's bidding to realize this. We now understand what we could not understand before. Had we taken his opening words and his exhortations as they stand, we might have thought that he was advocating a mere otherworldliness of a shallow and superficial kind ; but he is not doing that. We are now able to understand his meaning, and he bids you live in the world that is yours. Remember which world is yours, and that all these mortal days are to be lived in the right world ; your energies are to be

spent in the right and not in the wrong world; your thoughts and intents of mind are to be set in the right realm and not in the wrong. He does not mean that you are to neglect the earth you tread upon, but to remember that you are part of the new earth; and when he speaks of the world that is above and the world that is below, it is to remind you that you are no longer living in the old world that is governed by sin, nor are you living in the world that passes away and perishes. By faith ye live, and by faith which is high, true thought, you are to understand that now, in all the common round and trivial task, you are to live in the eternal world of Christ, and you are to live there for evermore.

Let me ask you to remember an obvious fact—that two men may walk along Fleet Street together, and be sundered by whole worlds. One may be living in an indescribable world of malice, hate, fraud, and duplicity. That is his world, not London. The other may be living in a world of sacrifice, service, honour, and devotion that can only be described by the name of Christ. That is his world, not London. They work out their destiny, their life, their purposes, on the same flags; but that is a superficial truth. They are each of them building up a world; one the old world that perishes, and the other the world of everlasting life. I am going to give you

an illustration of how a man may walk the common ways of life, and yet belong to the higher world ; the illustration is found in Wordsworth's great sonnet :

> Milton ! Thou shouldst be living at this hour :
> England hath need of thee : she is a fen
> Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
> Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
> Oh ! raise us up, return to us again,
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
> Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart :
> Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
> So didst thou travel on life's common way,
> In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

It is the powers of that higher world that we are sent into this world to make known, that the world may be redeemed.

We now understand the full meaning of Paul's words, ' Set your mind on the things that are above.' ' Set your mind ' means that the whole bent and disposition of your life is to be devoted to the things of Christ's world and kingdom. You are to realize your citizenship in that world ; and you are to remember that the only worthy ends of life are the ends that Christ has in His mind.

You are to set your mind on the things where Christ is ; and He is here. Christ's thoughts are to be your marching orders ; Christ's purposes are to be your inspiration. We have been raised from the dead with Christ ; we are His comrades, His fellows, His fellow workers ; some are in His cabinet ; some are the hewers of His wood and the drawers of His water. It matters not where we stand, so we stand in our rightful place ; and to draw water for the Christ in Christ's world and for Christ's purposes is work the Father would stoop to do with gladness. We are to set our mind there. Where your treasure is, there your heart is, and where your heart is, there your treasure is. You are called to realize the patriotism that is the patriotism of the citizens of Christ's kingdom, and to know that you have already entered into the city that God buildeth beyond the chance and change of time, beyond the measurements of space.

And lastly, speaking in the language of time, the day is coming when Christ shall be manifested. Do you realize that Christ is hidden ? The life is hidden in the sea, and the life is hidden in the earth, and the life is still hidden in the green corn as it grows. So is Christ hidden. Where ? In you : you are Christ's abiding-place. Hidden, too, is He beyond the veil. But hidden though

He be, He is the only reality. He is not merely living with you ; He is your very life. Listen ; the life moves within you, and is not your own possession. It is yourself, but it is not yours. It is Christ's, and Christ is God's. Take heed how you treat it ; take heed that you neglect it not. Let all your life die down in the dust if that only grow. It is the living Christ and no other who liveth, and breatheth, and hath His being in you. He did not come from the tomb to live a separate life, but to be the life of His people. It is God's method with Christ, that He may live within us till we attain His likeness. The day is to come when He shall be manifested. Somehow the veils will go. Somehow all that is temporal shall disappear. Somehow language shall perish, and thoughts stand clear out. Somehow the flesh shall fade away, and the real life itself shall be unfolded. Some day we shall stand beyond interpretations ; we shall be at the centre of things. He shall be manifested, and we shall be manifested in glory with Him. Our life grows onward with Him, to the day when we shall be *seen* to be with Him.

The life that is in you, not yourself, but He Himself, is not a life of the day merely, for this mortal stage merely ; it has in its womb, it has in its purpose, in its promise, the future that is to be, the seed of the life that yet shall be perfectly

one with Christ. He who was born into our world, He who calls us to die with Him to the old lower life, He who lives with us now through all the toil, the peril, the danger and the striving, will not fail to call us, will not fail to wed us closely to Him in the final things that are to be.

XVII

THE WORLD THAT SHALL BE OURS

Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.—PHIL. iii. 12.

'IF so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.' They are haunting words. They have haunted me for years, and I would fain open up for you the vista that they have opened up for me. Paul is speaking from the innermost of his heart, telling you what he is when you get to the heart of him, what he cares for, and then what he longs for. The treasures of earth have been in his hand: 'I count them but refuse that I may gain Christ—that I may know Him—if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead; not that I have already obtained—but I press on, if so be that I may find out that for which Christ found out me. I want to seize that for which Christ seized me, the secret of my life. Oh, I can talk about myself. If any other man can talk

about himself, I much more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee. But these things I counted refuse. I have reached a better self and found a higher Paul than that. This is Paul,—that I may know Christ, be found in Him. Yes, I can talk about myself, I know something about myself, but I do not know all. I do not know the highest, I do not know the supreme reason for my being; and therefore, forgetting the things that are behind—glorious as they have been—I press on, if so be that I may come to understand why Christ laid hold of me; if so be that at the last I may win the reason that led Christ to call me. I know something about myself, but then I shall know even as I am known. Then I shall have arrived, I shall have come to my real self, my higher self at last, when I come to the man Christ means me to be.' Haunting words, words that come from the spirit world, that lead on in seemingly ghost-like forms to the spirit world. But what if that which to us seems so solid shall be as a faded pageant, leaving not a rack behind, and when the light of the eternal truth is over everything we shall see that only the ghost-like was the real, and the spirit the only fact?

I would have us, then, understand Paul's wistfulness, and I would have us win that wistfulness

for ourselves. I would have us take this word and hide it in our hearts, that it may change us by its energy into its own likeness and spirit, and bring meanings, bring songs without words, bring uninterpretable anthems into our hearts, which shall only be fully understood when they are taken up in that final acclaim with which Christ shall be met when all His thoughts stand out living in the children of God.

It is so easy to live on pedigrees. 'Of the stock of Israel!' No, said Paul, I live into the future. I press on to the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I do not care where I came from; that cannot explain me. The cathedral is not explained by the mine from which you dug the stone. The cathedral is not explained by the mind of the man who dug the stone. The cathedral is not explained by the pettifogging student who goes about with foot-rule measuring. The cathedral is not explained even by the guide-book! It is explained by the mind of the man out of which it sprang. I am not explained by Benjamin. I am explained by the God who has called me, who calls me, and who will continue to call me until I answer Him, standing with bowed head and surprised and awakened spirit in His nearer presence, and say, 'Here am I.'

There is nothing more practical than such a

thought, nothing more practical in this workaday world than such a truth in the heart. There is only one definition of the word practical that will bear a moment's examination. It is a word on every lip, yet seldom understood. 'The practical is that which produces practice,' and if you want to turn the world upside down, or if you want to create a new world, there is nothing so practical for your purpose as a new thought. You are not to submit to the cheap, easy sneers at 'other-worldliness' which sometimes are hawked about our streets, with less effrontery now than thirty years ago. You are not to submit thereto, for there is nothing that can so clean our streets, there is nothing that can so cleanse our hearts, there is nothing that can so lift London to be the New Jerusalem, as the thoughts that come out of the silence of the Eternal, and lead on and on up the mist-clad heights beyond our reach, even beyond our measurement, till lost in the unrevealed mysteries of the purposes of God. Listen: 'Now'—the present, is always linked with the after, and if you are living in a 'now' that is not linked to the afterwards your ship will sink in mid-ocean—'Now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is.' They tell me I have carried you into the unpracticable regions

of a yet unrealized future state. But listen again : ' Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' There is nothing that will so clean your streets and cleanse your hearts as the hope which remains when the things of to-day have ceased to be. 'Hitch your wagon to a star.'

We have here one of the keys which successively unlock the doors of Paul's life, and which will unlock the interpretations of our own. You notice this great view which Paul has of his salvation. We speak, rightly, but not in the supreme manner of Paul, of giving our hearts to God. That is a great truth about us, but it is not the highest truth under which to live. If we think of our conversion—what the manner of it was I care not—as a surrender on our part merely, we have not understood it. If ever a man was converted it was Paul. Conversion means change of mind, and if ever any man buried his old beliefs and took up new thoughts and purposes, it was Saul of Tarsus. But Paul always felt and always spoke as if on that Damascus road it was not he who found Christ : it was the Christ who had found him. And your soul is to live in the centre and the silence where dwell the awe and reverence produced by this thought: You have not, by searching, found out God. God has found out

you. You have not claimed God. First of all He has claimed you. More even than that : it is not the sole truth that you need Christ. It is a deeper truth still that Christ needs you. Your salvation is not dependent upon the infirm strength of your own heart. Your salvation, your life, your present and your future, are not built upon your own resolutions, or even on your own change or growth of mind. There is One who has apprehended us (laid hold of us, the word means) and He has His reasons for doing so. Not because you want to be saved from your sins, though that is an ever-present and insistent and needful reason ; not because you desire to live the higher, the new-born life, though may that ever be the prayer deathless within your hearts ; not because of any movement or passion in your heart ; but, supremely, because Christ has thought of you, Christ has meant you, Christ needs you. You are one of the expressions of His purpose ; and, said Paul, ' I will not rest until I find out, when I stand on yonder cloud-capped height that to-day I cannot see, until I find out the reason, and what it is that Christ wants me for.'

So when Christ laid hold of Saul in seeming violence on the Damascus road, Christ revealed there His intention to get Paul. And, as the years went by, Paul came to see, and, as the centuries

have gone by, we have come to see, the first and immediate reason that was in the mind of Christ. Saul of Tarsus was the one man on earth necessary for the largest purposes of God in the first century of our era. So convinced was Paul of this that he afterwards said that from his very birth God had been preparing him. There was no other man living capable, as Saul of Tarsus was capable, of carrying the Christian gospel out of its narrow cradle of Judaism into the market-place and the university of the thought of the world, of taking the gospel, cradled in the swaddling-clothes of a narrow creed, into the life and light of all the nations of men. Saul of Tarsus was necessary, and he felt that Christ had laid hold of him, not, first of all, for the sake of Saul of Tarsus, but—reverently be it spoken—for Christ's own sake, for the sake of His own purposes, for the glorious work that had to get itself done on this earth of ours.

Paul found out that reason why Christ wanted him; and you and I peradventure, as the years go on, find out what God's meaning with us is, what God's purpose in us is. We come, dimly perhaps, perhaps clearly, to understand that there has been some reason in the madness of the whirling chance and change of things, and we have come to be what we are, and to be where we are, not by chance, but because there is One whose

mind is regnant, in submission to whose mind is our peace and calm and strength ; that there is One who reigneth, and—blessed be He—who reigneth over the domain of my life, and who has made me a subject of His will. 'I, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ.' It was his signature, and in it he wrote out the meaning of his life. 'I, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ. I am what He bids me be, I do what He bids me do. The interpretation of it is with Him.'

But Paul tells us here for himself and for us that that is not all. A man may come to be Archbishop of Canterbury, and, in all sincerity of heart, may see that all his life has been leading up to that, that God has prepared him for that position, that at the moment he, of all men, is most fitted to take that place, and he then may joyfully live therein. (God pity him who knows that somebody else ought to be there !) But the archbishop, or the monarch, or you and I, wherever we may be, recognizing that we are in our right place, and that God has meant it, we are but poor thinkers, we are poor climbers, and we shall fail of the end of our life, unless we grip this fact that this is but a passing stage, and even to be the apostle of the Gentiles is not enough. To have accomplished what you and I have accomplished, to have reached the being that you and I have reached, is far from enough. Once again,

we must not take ourselves as we are to-day too seriously. We have not reached finality, and the greatest, strongest things in our lives are the unfulfilled things, the yearnings, the discontent, the aspirations, the love, faith, and hope reaching upwards. We are to recognize that while we do our daily duty, stand daily in our own place. Listen to Paul—however high he may soar he is always in touch with the common days—' Only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk ' (verse 16). You are not to have any dreams that are not related to the day. Dreams you are to have that go out of sight, that break through language and escape, but they are not to suffuse your life with softness and inertness. Remember, to be apostle to the Gentiles is a step upwards towards what Christ meant him to be. ' Whereunto we have attained '—it is God's will that we have attained thereunto if we have walked sincerely; therefore by all that we know now, by all the light we have gained, let us be steadfastly loyal and walk there. But, nevertheless, that is not the end.

The strongest things in our life, and the most precious, are the prayers, the hopes that go out in limitless vista ; you and I are to live knowing this, that life through all the universe is being drawn upwards unconsciously. You may trace in the sponge, you may trace in the daisy, you

may trace through all the life of nature, purposes leading the sponge to a life of community, leading flowers to the creation of beauty. Those purposes are absolutely unknown to sponge or flower, but in man they come into the light, and we dimly begin to understand. Nevertheless, we must not limit those purposes by our understanding. Link and bind your life to the thoughts of God wherever you see them, but remember in reverence and in awe that the thoughts of God are wider than the measures of man's mind, and we are being drawn upwards, all of us, all life in this universe is being drawn upwards to culmination and fruition. We are the topmost part, we are the supreme part of it, for which all the rest exists. In us it comes to consciousness. In us it comes to understanding. We are to press on in the Christ life, if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not 'the resurrection *of* the dead;' that is a mistake. Paul would mean by that the general resurrection of all, good or bad; but when he spoke of the resurrection *from* the dead he meant something dim and undefined, much too high to be defined in the words of this life. There is a life beyond, which shall come out of this present life, 'the city of just men made perfect,' and you and I have a place to fill therein. We fill a place to-day. Let us be faithful. But in that final society of the perfected of God's own people

you and I have a place to fill. We are being called; we are awaited; Christ has laid hold of us with a purpose, and 'I press on until I apprehend why I have been apprehended by God, until the secret of my life becomes my life.'

APPENDIX

Note A (page 31)

THE BEATITUDES IN MATTHEW AND THEIR 'PARALLELS' IN LUKE

From the point of view in this paragraph of the sermon, there is seen a solution of the difficulty that arises from the difference between Matt. v. 3-12 and Luke vi. 20-26. I would suggest that, for the most part, these are not 'parallel' accounts of Christ's Beatitudes. What strikes me, on reading them together, is the great difference between them, and the comparatively small area covered by any clear similarity. (1) This similarity is really confined to the beatitudes on the mourners and the persecuted, and even there it is not complete. (2) It is scarcely worthy of critical or any other scholarship to eviscerate Matt. v. 3-6, in order to bring them into conformity with Luke vi. 20-21. (3) Half of what Luke includes—the woes—has no counterpart at all in Matthew.

This leads us to the solution: that for the most part the records are distinct, and give us (*a*) in Matthew, what Jesus said to the large company of disciples; (*b*) what He said to the mixed company that had followed Him to the hills.

Luke mentions both companies: (*a*) 'a great multitude of His disciples, and (*b*) a great number of the people from all Judæa and Jerusalem . . . .' (vi. 17). Matthew mentions both (v. 1).

Luke speaks of Jesus meeting the crowds on the plain

(17) ; Matthew tells that He withdrew from the crowd and from the plain, and went with His disciples to the uplands (v. 1).

Now it is not psychologically possible to fit the woes of Luke vi. 24-26, into the address of Jesus to His disciples, nor is there any call in that address for vi. 20-21. These are obviously addressed to another need, to a *mixed* audience.

The solution, then, that is here offered is this: Jesus met the crowds that had gathered from many towns and villages, and all parts of the country—met them at the time when He was separating disciple from hearer, follower from people—crowds in which rich and poor, friend and foe were mingled. On the plain He addresses them, struck by the differences among them, and words of this address have come to us in Luke vi. 20-26. Then He withdraws, followed by those who would be His, and to them He opens His inner mind (Matt. v.).

Accordingly Luke's error is in ascribing these verses 20-26 to the same address to 'the disciples' (20) as the rest, 27-36.

Note B (page 68)

THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

It becomes clear that to speak of the 'literal interpretation and fulfilment of the Sermon on the Mount' is absurd. Nay, worse than absurd, for such interpretation would empty the words of their real and full meaning. Literally interpreted v. 39^b is an injunction which Christ did not follow (John xviii. 22-23) ; yet the real meaning underlying it is as the breath of His Spirit, the beating of the heart of love that bore so much, and then broke on Calvary. Are

we to lose this for the sake of 'literalness'? Then v. 41 is, literally taken, valueless; *interpreted*, it becomes priceless. Lastly, v. 42, literally taken, is easy of fulfilment and deadly in effect; read with Christ's meaning, it is the Holy Grail of the spirit of high adventure, and the very life-blood of God Himself.

Note C (page 174)

MARY MAGDALENE.

The identification of Magdalene with the 'woman who was a sinner' (Luke vii. 36-50) is the most gratuitous error ever made in connexion with biblical study. It is a cruel misfortune that in the heading prefixed to chapter vii. in the Authorized Version this woman is called Mary Magdalene. *For this there is no reason whatever.* The mistake is, of course, a serious one, and it is a mistake that one almost despairs of overtaking and killing. The fair fame of Magdalene seems indelibly besmirched—is not her name attached to crusades and houses of redemption? No wrong has ever been more gratuitous.

There are three women that need to be distinguished from one another. (1) The woman of whom Luke tells, and Luke alone (vii. 36-50)—she anointed His feet. (2) Mary Magdalene, whom He saved from insanity (pages 176-9). (3) Mary 'of Bethany' who also anointed His feet, of whom Matthew (xxvi. 6-13) and Mark (xiv. 3-9) tell, without revealing her name, this being given us by John (xii. 1-8)—for which see pages 126-8.

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